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SONGS OF THE SUN-LANDS.



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SONGS OF THE SUN-LANDS.

Poetry

BY JOAQUIN MILLER.

AUTHOR OF "SONGS OF THE SIERRAS."

"The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
And these are of them."



LONDON:

LONGMANS, GREEN, READER AND DYER.

1873.



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TO THE ROSSETTIS.



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BY THE SUNDOWN SEAS.





BY THE SUN-DOWN SEAS.

PART I.

I.

LIKE fragments of an uncompleted world,
From icy bleak Alaska, white with spray,
To where the peaks of Darien lie curl'd
In clouds, the broken lands loom bold and grey.
The seamen nearing San Francisco Bay
Forget the compass here ; with sturdy hand
They seize the wheel, look up, then bravely lay
The ship to shore by rugged peaks that stand
The stern and proud patrician fathers of the land.

II.

They stand white stairs of heaven—stand a line
Of climbing, endless, and eternal white.
They look upon the far and flashing brine,
Upon the boundless plains, the broken height
Of Kamiakin's battlements. The flight
Of time is underneath their untopp'd towers.
They seem to push aside the moon at night,
To jostle and to loose the stars. The flowers
Of heaven fall about their brows in shining showers.

III.

They stand a line of lifted snowy isles
High held above a toss'd and tumbled sea—
A sea of wood in wild unmeasured miles :
White pyramids of God where man is free ;
White monuments of God that yet shall be
The mounts of matchless and immortal song. . . .
I look far down the hollow days ; I see
The bearded prophets, simple-soul'd and strong,
That strike the sounding harp and thrill the heeding
throng.

IV.

Serene and satisfied ! supreme ! as lone
As God, they loom above cloud-banners furl'd ;
They look as cold as kings upon a throne :
The mantling wings of night are crush'd and curl'd
As feathers curl. The elements are hurl'd
From off their bosoms, and are bidden go,
Like evil spirits, to an under-world.
They stretch from Cariboo to Mexico,
A line of battle-tents in everlasting snow.

V.

See once Columbia's scenes, then roam no more ;
No more remains on earth to cultured eyes ;
The cataract comes down, a broken roar,
The palisades defy approach, and rise
Green moss'd and dripping to the clouded skies.
The cañon thunders with its full of foam,
And calls loud-mouth'd, and all the land defies ;
The mounts make fellowship and dwell at home
In snowy brotherhood beneath their purpled dome.

VI.

The rainbows swim in circles round, and rise
Against the hanging granite walls till lost
In drifting dreamy clouds and dappled skies,
A grand mosaic intertwined and toss'd
Along the mighty cañon, bound and cross'd
By storms of screaming birds of sea and land ;
The salmon rush below, bright red and boss'd
In silver. Tawny, tall, on either hand
You see the savage spearmen nude and silent stand.

VII.

Here sweep the wide wild waters cold and white
And blue in their far depths ; divided now
By sudden swift canoe as still and light
As feathers nodding from the painted brow
That lifts and looks from out the imaged prow.
Ashore you hear the papoose shout at play ;
The curl'd smoke comes from underneath the bough
Of leaning fir : the wife looks far away
And sees a swift sweet bark divide the dashing spray.

VIII.

Slow drift adown the river's lell'd deep,
And look above; lo, columns! woods! the snow!
The rivers rush upon the brink and leap
From out the clouds three thousand feet below,
And land afoam in tops of firs that grow
Against your river's rim: they splash, they play,
In clouds, now loud and now subdued and slow,
A thousand thunder tones; they swing and sway
In idle winds, long leaning shafts of shining spray.

IX.

An Indian summer-time it was, long past,
We lay on the Columbia, far below
The stormy water-falls, and God had cast
Us heaven's stillness. Dreamily and slow
We drifted as the light bark chose to go.
An Indian girl with ornaments of shell
Began to sing. . . . The stars may hold such flow
Of hair, such eyes, but rarely earth. There fell
A sweet enchantment that possess'd me as a spell:

X.

We saw the elk forsake the sable wood,
Step quick across the rim of shining sand,
Breast out in troop against the flashing flood,
Then brisket deep with lifted antlers stand,
And ears alert, look sharp on either hand,
Then whistle shrill to dam and doubting fawn
To follow, lead with black nose to the land—
They cross'd, they climb'd the heaving hills, were
gone,
A sturdy charging line with crooked sabres drawn :

XI.

Then black swans cross'd us slowly low and still ;
Then other swans, wide-wing'd and white as snow
Flew overhead and topp'd the timber'd hill,
And call'd and sang afar coarse-voiced and slow,
Till sounds roam'd lost in sombre firs below. . . .
Then clouds blew in, and all the sky was cast
With tumbled and tumultuous clouds that grow
Red thunderbolts. . . A flash ! A thunder-blast !
The clouds were rent, and lo ! Mount Hood hung white
and vast.

XII.

Once, morn by morn, when snowy mountains flamed
With sudden shafts of light that shot a flood
Into the vale like fiery arrows aim'd
At night from mighty battlements, there stood
Upon a cliff high-limn'd against Mount Hood,
A matchless bull fresh forth from sable wold,
And standing so seem'd grander 'gainst the wood
Than wingèd bull that stood with tips of gold
Beside the brazen gates of Babylon of old.

XIII.

A time he toss'd the dewy turf, and then
Stretch'd forth his wrinkled neck, and long and loud
He call'd above the far abodes of men
Until his breath became a curling cloud
And wreathed about his neck a misty shroud.
He then as sudden as he came pass'd on
With lifted head, majestic and most proud,
And lone as night in deepest wood withdrawn
He roam'd in silent rage until another dawn.

XIV.

What drove the hermit from the valley herd,
What cross of love, what cold neglect of kind,
Or scorn of unpretending worth had stirr'd
The stubborn blood and drove him forth to find
A fellowship in mountain cloud and wind,
I ofttime wonder'd much ; and ofttime thought
The beast betray'd a royal monarch's mind,
To lift above the low herd's common lot,
And make them hear him still when they had fain forgot.

XV.

His broad-brimm'd hat push'd back with careless air,
The proud vaquero sits his steed as free
As winds that toss his black abundant hair.
No rover ever swept a lawless sea
With such a haught and heedless air as he
Who scorns the path, and bounds with swift disdain
Away : a peon born, yet born to be
A splendid king ; behold him ride, and reign,
The only perfect monarch of the mottled plain.

XVI.

How brave he takes his herds in branding days,
On timber'd hills that belt about the plain ;
He climbs, he wheels, he shouts through winding ways
Of hiding ferns and hanging fir ; the rein
Is loose, the rattling spur drives swift ; the mane
Blows free ; the bullocks rush in storms before ;
They turn with lifted heads, they rush again,
Then sudden plunge from out the wood, and pour
A cloud upon the plain with one terrific roar.

XVII.

Now sweeps the tawny man on stormy steed,
His gaudy trappings toss'd about and blown
Above the limbs as lithe as any reed ;
The swift long lasso twirl'd above is thrown
From flying hand ; the fall, the fearful groan
Of bullock toil'd and tumbled in the dust—
The black herds onward sweep, and all disown
The fallen struggling monarch that has thrust
His tongue in rage and roll'd his red eyes in disgust.

XVIII.

A morn in Oregon ! The kindled camp
Upon the mountain brow that broke below
In steep and grassy stairway to the damp
And dowy valley, snapp'd and flamed aglow
With knots of pine. Above, the peaks of snow,
With under-belts of sable forests, rose
And flash'd in sudden sunlight. To and fro
And far below, in lines and winding rows,
The herders drove their bands, and broke the deep repose.

XIX.

I heard their shouts like sounding hunter's horn,
The lowing herds made echoes far away ;
When lo ! the clouds came driving in with morn
Toward the sea, as fleeing from the day.
The valleys fill'd with curly clouds. They lay
Below, a levell'd sea that reach'd and roll'd
And broke like breakers of a stormy bay
Against the grassy shingle fold on fold,
So like a splendid ocean, snowy white and cold.

XX.

The peopled valley lay a hidden world,
The shouts were shouts of drowning men that died,
The broken clouds along the border curl'd,
And bent the grass with weighty freight of tide.
A savage stood in silence at my side,
Then sudden threw aback his beaded strouds
And stretch'd his hand above the scene, and cried,
As all the land lay dead in snowy shrouds :
“ Behold ! the sun upon a silver sea of clouds.”

XXI.

Here lifts the land of clouds ! The mantled forms,
Made white with everlasting snow, look down
Through mists of many cañons, and the storms
That stretch from Autumn time until they drown
The yellow hem of Spring. The cedars frown,
Dark-brow'd, through banner'd clouds that stretch
and stream
Above the sea from snowy mountain crown.
The heavens roll, and all things drift or seem
To drift about and drive like some majestic dream.

XXII.

In waning Autumn time, when purpled skies
Begin to haze in indolence below
The snowy peaks, you see black forms arise
In rolling thunder banks above, and throw
Quick barricades about the gleaming snow.
The strife begins! The battling seasons stand
Broad breast to breast. A flash! Contentions grow
Terrific. Thunders crash, and lightnings brand
The battlements. The clouds possess the stormy land.

.XXIII.

Then clouds blow by, the swans take loftier flight,
The yellow blooms burst out upon the hill,
The purple camas comes as in a night,
Tall spiked and dripping of the dews that fill
The misty valley. . . Sunbeams break and spill
Their glory till the vale is full of noon.
The roses belt the streams, no bird is still. . .
The stars, as large as lilies, meet the moon
And sing of summer, born thus sudden full and soon.



BY THE SUN-DOWN SEAS.

PART II.



I.



TALE half told and hardly understood ;
The talk of bearded men that chanced to
meet,

That lean'd on long quaint rifles in the wood,
That look'd in fellow faces, spoke discreet
And low, as half in doubt and in defeat
Of hope ; a tale it was of lands of gold
That lay toward the sun. Wild wing'd and fleet
It spread about the swift Missouri's bold
Unbridled men, and reach'd to where Ohio roll'd.

II.

The long chain'd lines of yoked and patient steers ;
The long white trains that pointed to the west,
Beyond the savage west ; the hopes and fears
Of blunt untutor'd men, who hardly guess'd
Their course ; the brave and silent women, dress'd
In homely spun attire, the boys in bands,
The cheery babes that laugh'd at all, and bless'd
The doubting hearts with shouts and lifted hands,
Proclaim'd an exodus for far untraversed lands.

III.

The Plains ! The shouting drivers at the wheel ;
The crash of leather whips ; the crush and roll
Of wheels ; the groan of yokes and grinding steel
And iron chain, and lo ! at last the whole
Vast line, that reach'd as if to touch the goal,
Began to stretch and stream away and wind
Toward the west, as if with one control ;
Then hope loom'd fair, and home lay far behind ;
Before, the boundless plain, and fiercest of their kind.

IV.

The way lay wide and green and fresh as seas
And far away as any reach of wave ;
The sunny streams went by in belt of trees ;
And here and there the tassel'd, tawny brave
Swept by on horse, look'd back, stretch'd forth and
gave
A yell of hell, and then did wheel and rein
A while, and point away, dark-brow'd and grave,
Into the far and dim and distant plain
With signs and prophecies, and then plunged on again.

V.

Some hills at last began to lift and break ;
Some streams began to fail of wood and tide,
The sombre plain began betime to take
A hue of weary brown, and wild and wide
It stretch'd its naked breast on every side. . . .
A babe was heard at last to cry for bread
Amid the deserts ; cattle low'd and died,
And dying men went by with broken tread,
And left a long black serpent line of wreck and dead.

VI.

Strange hunger'd birds, black-wing'd and still as
death,
And crown'd of red with hookèd beaks, blew low
And close about, till we could touch their breath—
Strange unnamed birds, that seem'd to come and go
In circles now, and now direct and slow,
Continual, and never touch the earth.
Slim foxes skied and shuttled to and fro
At times across the dusty weary dearth
Of life, look'd back, then sank like crickets in a hearth.

VII.

The dust arose, a long dim line like smoke
From out a riven earth. The wheels went by,
The thousand feet in harness and in yoke,
They tore the ways of ashen alkali,
And desert winds blew sudden, swift and dry.
The dust! It sat upon and fill'd the train!
It seem'd to fret and cloud the very sky.
Lo! dust upon the beasts, the tent, the plain,
And dust, alas! on breasts that rose not up again.

VIII.

They sat in desolation and in dust
By dried-up desert streams ; the mother's hands
Hid all her bended face ; the cattle thrust
Their tongues and faintly call'd across the lands.
The babes, that knew not what the way through sands
Could mean, would ask if it would end to-day
The panting wolves slid by, red-eyed, in bands
To streams beyond. The men look'd far away,
And silent saw that all a level desert lay.

IX.

They rose by night ; they struggled on and on
As thin and still as ghosts ; then here and there
Beside the dusty way before the dawn,
Men silent laid them down in their despair,
And died. But woman ! Woman, frail as fair !
May man have strength to give to you your due ;
You falter'd not, nor murmur'd anywhere,
You held your babes, held to your course, and you
Bore on through burning hell your double burthens
through.

X.

They stood at last, the decimated few,
Above a land of running streams, and they . . . ?
They push'd aside the boughs, and peering through,
Beheld afar the cool, refreshing bay ;
Then some did curse, and some bend hands to pray ;
But some look'd back upon the desert, wide
And desolate with death, then all the day
They wept. But one, with nothing left beside
His dog to love, crept down among the ferns and died.

XI.

I stood upon the green Sierra's wall ;
Toward the east, beyond the yellow grass,
I saw the broken hill-tops lift and fall,
Then sands that shimmer like a sea of glass,
In all the shining summer days that pass.
There lies the nation's great high road of dead.
Forgotten aye, unnumber'd, and, alas !
Unchronicled in deed or death ; instead,
The stiff aristocrat lifts high a lordly head.

XII.

My brave and unremember'd heroes, rest ;
You fell in silence, silent lie and sleep.
Sleep on unsung, for this, I say, were best ;
The world to-day has hardly time to weep ;
The world to-day will hardly care to keep
In heart her plain and unpretending brave.
The desert winds, they whistle by and sweep
About you ; brown'd and russet grasses wave
Along a thousand leagues that lie one common grave.

XIII.

The proud and careless pass in palace car
Along the line you blazon'd white with bones ;
Pass swift to people, and possess and mar
Your lands with monuments and letter'd stones
Unto themselves. Thank God ! this waste disowns
Their touch. His everlasting hand has drawn
A shining line around you. Wealth bemoans
The waste your splendid grave employs. Sleep on,
No hand shall touch your dust this side of God and
dawn.

XIV.

There came another, far less noble race ;
They shot across the iron grooves, a host
Of school'd and cunning men ; they push'd from
place
The simple pioneer, and mock'd, and most
Of all set strife along the peaceful coast.
The rude unletter'd settler, bound and coil'd
In controversy, then before the boast
Of bold contentious men, confused and foiled,
Turn'd mute to wilder lands, and left his home despoil'd.

XV.

I let them stride across with grasping hands
And strive for brief possession ; mark and line
With lifted walls the new divided lands,
And gather growing herds of lowing kine.
I could not covet these, could not confine
My heart to one ; all seem'd to me the same,
And all below my mountain home, divine
And beautiful held in another's name,
As if the herds and lands were mine, subdued and tame.

XVI.

I have not been, shall not be, understood ;
I have not wit, nor will, to well explain,
But that which men call good I find not good.
The lands the savage held, shall hold again,
The gold the savage spurn'd in proud disdain
For centuries ; go, take them all ; build high
Your gilded temples ; strive and strike and strain
And crowd and controvert and curse and lie
In church and state, in town and citadel, and—die.

XVII.

And who shall grow the nobler from it all ?
The mute and unsung savage loved as true—
He felt, as grateful felt, God's blessings fall
About his lodge and tawny babes as you
In temples : Moslem, Christian monk or Jew.
. . . The sea, the great white, braided, bounding sea,
Is laughing in your face ; the arching blue
Remains to God ; the mountains still are free,
A refuge for the few remaining tribes and me.

XVIII.

Your cities ! from the first the hand of God
Has been against them ; sword and flood and flame,
The earthquake's march, and pestilence, have trod
To undiscerning dust the very name
Of antique capitals ; and still the same
Sad destiny besets the battlefields
Of Mammon and the harlot's house of shame.
Lo ! man with monuments and lifted shields
Against his city's fate. A flame ! his city yields.

XIX.

Whose ill had I devised, what evil done,
That I was bidden to arise and go ? . . .
I hear the clear Columbian waters run,
I see the white Pacific flash and flow
Below the swaying cedar-trees that grow
On peaks pre-eminent ; but never mine
Again the wooded way on steed of snow,
The freeman's mountain camp in cloud or shine,
Or pure companionship of meek-eyed mottled kine.

XX.

What wonder that I swore a prophet's oath
Of after days . . . I push'd the boughs apart,
I stood, look'd forth, and then look'd back, all loth
To leave my shadow'd wood. I gather'd heart
From very fearfulness ; with sudden start
I plunged in the arena ; stood a wild
Uncertain thing, and artless all in art. . . .
The brave approved, the fair lean'd fair and smiled—
The lions touch with velvet-touch a timid child.

XXI.

But now enough of men. Enough, brief day
Of tamer life. The court, the castle gate
That open'd wide along a pleasant way,
The gracious converse of the kingly great . .
Had made another glad and well elate
With hope. A world of thanks ; but I am grown
Aweary. . . . I am not of this estate ;
The poor, the plain brave border men alone
Were my first love, and these I will not now disown.

XXII.

Who loves the least may oft lament most loud :
I stand mute-mouth'd upon a far grey shore ;
The soul lifts up, a lone and white-wing'd cloud,
And like some sea-bird back and then before
The storm of seas, it seeks my land once more ;
And here about the peaceful peaks, as white
As steps of God, until the fates restore
My feet, shall it abide : the sea at night
Has flash'd reflections back from foamy fields of light.

XXIII.

I know a grassy slope above the sea,
The utmost limit of the westmost land.
In savage, gnarl'd, and antique majesty
The great trees belt about the place, and stand
In guard, with mailèd limb and lifted hand
Against the cold approaching civic pride.
The foamy brooklets seaward leap ; the bland
Still air is fresh with touch of wood and tide,
And peace, eternal peace, possesses wild and wide.



XXIV.

Here I return, here I abide and rest ;
Some flocks and herds shall feed along the stream ;
Some corn and climbing vines shall make us blest
With bread and luscious fruit. . . . The sunny dream
Of savage men in mocassins that seem
To come and go in silence, girt in shell,
Before a sun-clad cabin-door, I deem
The harbinger of peace. Hope weaves her spell
Again about the wearied heart, and all is well.

XXV.

Here I shall sit in sunlit life's decline
Beneath my vine and sombre verdant tree.
Some tawny maids in other tongues than mine
Shall minister. Some memories shall be
Before me. I shall sit and I shall see,
That last vast day that dawn shall re-inspire,
The sun fall down upon the farther sea,
Fall wearied down to rest, and so retire,
A splendid sinking isle of far-off fading fire.



BY THE SUN-DOWN SEAS.

PART III.

I.



THE stormy Isles of story and of song,
Lo ! yonder lie, white lifting from the
sea.

The head is bow'd a time, then loud and long
The shouts go up ; men lean tiptoed, to be
One instant nearer ; turn, catch high and free
Their little babes above the leaning band,
And lift and point and bid them look and see
And laugh with them and shout with lifted hand
To see at last the land ; their sires' sires' darling land.

II.

Thou, mother of brave men, of nations ! Thou,
The white-brow'd Queen of bold white-bearded Sea !
Thou wert of old even the same as now,
So strong, so tame yet fierce, so bound yet free,
A contradiction and a mystery ;
Serene, yet passionate, in ways thine own.
Thy white ships wind and weave all time for thee
The zones of earth, aye thou hast set and sown
The seas in bed of blossom'd sail, white-spread and
blown.

III.

Above yon inland populace the skies
Are pink and mellow'd soft in rosy light.
The crown of earth ! A halo seems to rise
And hang perpetual above by night,
And dash by day the heavens, till the sight
Betrays the city's presence to the wave.
You hear a hollow sound as of the might
Of seas ; you see the march of fair and brave
In millions ; moving, moving, moving to—a grave.

IV.

I see above a crowded world a cross
Of gold. It grows like some fork'd cedar-tree
Upon a peak in shroud of cloud and moss,
Made bare and bronzed in far antiquity.
Stupendous pile ! The grim Yosemite
Has rent apart his granite wall, and thrown
Its rugged front before us. . . . Here I see
The strides of giant men in cryptic stone,
And turn, and slow descend where sleep the great alone.

V.

The mighty captains have come home to rest ;
The brave return'd to sleep amid the brave.
The sentinel that stood with steely breast
Before the fiery hosts of France, and gave
The battle-cry that roll'd, receding wave
On wave, the foeman flying back and far,
Is here. How still ! Yet louder now the grave
Than ever crushing Belgian battle-car
Or blue and battle-shaken seas of Trafalgar.

VI.

The verger stalks in stiff importance o'er
The hollow, deep, and strange responding stones ;
He stands with lifted staff unchid before
The forms that once had crush'd or fashion'd thrones,
And coldly points you out the coffin'd bones :
He stands composed where armies could not stand
A little time before. . . . The hand disowns
The idle sword, and now instead the grand
And golden cross makes sign and takes austere
command.

VII.

The Abbey broods beside the turbid Thames ;
Her mother heart is fill'd with memories ;
Her every niche is stored with storied names ;
They move before me like a mist of seas.
I am confused, am made abash'd by these
Most kingly souls, grand, silent, and severe.
I am not equal, I should sore displease
The living . . . dead. I dare not enter ; drear
And stain'd in storms of grander days all things appear.

VIII.

I go ! but shall I not return again
When Art has taught me gentler, kindlier skill
And time has given force and strength of strain ?
I go ! O ye that dignify and fill
The chronicles of earth ! I would instil
Into my soul somehow the atmosphere
Of sanctity that here usurps the will ;
But go ; I seek the tomb of one—a peer
Of peers—whose dust a fool refused to cherish here.

IX.

O master, here I bow before a shrine ;
Before the lordliest dust that ever yet
Moved animate in human form divine.
Lo ! dust indeed to dust. The mould is set
Above thee and the ancient walls are wet,
And drip all day in dank and silent gloom,
As if the cold grey stones could not forget
Thy great estate shrunk to this sombre room,
But learn to weep perpetual tears above thy tomb.

X.

Through broken panes I hear the schoolboys shout,
I see the black-wing'd engines sweep and pass,
And from the peopled narrow plot without,
Well grown with brier, moss, and heaving grass,
I see the Abbey loom an ivied mass,
Made eloquent of faiths, of fates to be,
Of creeds, and perish'd kings ; and still, alas,
O soldier-child ! most eloquent of thee,
Of thy sad life, and all the unseal'd mystery.

XI.

Before me lie the oak-crown'd Annesley hills,
Before me lifts the ancient Annesley Hall
Above the mossy oaks. . . . A picture fills
With forms of other days. A maiden tall
And fair ; a fiery restless boy, with all
The force of man ; a steed that frets without ;
A long thin sword that rusts upon the wall. . . .
The generations pass. . . . Behold ! about
The ivied hall the fair-hair'd children sport and shout.

XII.

A line of elms along the hill-top run ;
The diadem of oaks is torn away ;
Discrown'd the promontory meets the sun,
And here is set the record of a day,
Of meaning full and memories ; and gray
With annals dear to Annesley Hall, it stands,
A stone, with but this single word to say—
But “Inkerman !” and lifts its unseen hands,
And beckons far to battle-fields of other lands.

XIII.

I look into the dread, forbidding tomb ;
Lo ! darkness—death. The soul on shifting sand
That belts Eternity, gropes in the gloom. . . .
The black-wing'd bird goes forth in search of land,
But turns no more to reach my reaching hand. . . .
O land beyond the land ! I lean me o'er
Thy dust in prayer devout. . . . I rise, I stand
Erect ; the stormy seas are thine no more ;
A weary white-wing'd dove has touch'd the olive shore.

XIV.

A bay-wreath woven by the sundown west
Hangs damp and stain'd upon the dank grey wall,
Above thy time-soil'd tomb and tatter'd crest;
A bay-wreath gather'd by the seas that call
To orient Cathay, that break and fall
On shell-lined shores before Tahiti's breeze. . . .
A slab, a crest, a wreath, and these are all
Neglected, tatter'd, torn; yet only these
The world bestows for song that rivall'd singing seas.

XV.

A bay-wreath wound by one more truly brave
Than Shastan; fair as thy eternal fame,
She sat and wove above the sunset wave,
And wound and sang thy measures and thy name.
'Twas wound by one, yet sent with one acclaim
By many, fair and warm as flowing wine,
And purely true, and tall as growing flame,
That list and lean in moonlight's mellow shine
To tropic tales of love in other tongues than thine.

XVI.

I bring this idle reflex of thy task,
And my few loves, to thy forgotten tomb :
I leave them here ; and here all pardon ask
Of thee, and patience ask of singers whom
Thy majesty hath silenced. I resume
My staff, and now my face is to the West ;
My feet are worn ; the sun is gone, a gloom
Has mantled Hucknall, and the minstrel's zest
For fame is broken here, and here he pleads for rest.





FROM SEA TO SEA.



*We glide through golden seas of grain ;
We shoot, a shining comet, through
The mountain range against the blue
And then below the walls of snow,
We blow the desert dust amain ;
We brush the gay madrona tree,
We see the orange groves below—
We rest beneath the oaks ; and we
Have cleft a continent in twain.*



FROM SEA TO SEA.

1.

FIRST DAY.—The sun climbs over the wall of the Atlantic. The train drops down; the people, passengers and friends, crowd the platform. Confusion. They fill the cars, cling to the bars and railing; shout, and laugh and weep farewells!



SHAKE hands! kiss hands in
haste to the sea,
Where the sun comes in, and
mount with me

The matchless steed of the strong New
World,

That champs and chafes with a strength
untold,—

And away to the West, where the waves
are curl'd,

As they kiss white palms to the capes of
gold!

A shriek of engines!
—the train shoots out
—friends leap from the
flying cars! Free-
dom!!

A girth of brass and a breast of
steel,
A breath of fire and a flaming mane,
An iron hoof and a steel-clad heel,
A Mexican bit and a massive chain
Well tried and wrought in an iron rein;
And away! away! with a shout and yell
That had stricken a legion of old with fear,
That had started the dead from their graves
whilere,
And startled the damn'd in hell as well.

Stand out on the
quivering platform—
lean over the rail,
shifting forests, flash-
ing rivers, and hang-
ing hills. Mountains!
climbing woods! vales
of gold! burning
bushes on hills of
green! Matchless and
magnificent!

Stand up! stand out! where the wind
comes in,
And the wealth of the seas pours over you,
As its health floods up to the face like
wine,
And a breath blows up from the Delaware
And the Susquehanna. We feel the might
Of armies in us; the blood leaps through
The frame with a fresh and a keen delight
As the Alleghanies have kiss'd the hair,

With a kiss blown far through the rush and
 din,
 By the chestnut burs and through boughs of
 pine.

II.

SECOND DAY.—
 Seas to the right that
 are misnamed lakes.
 Little islands away to
 the north filled with
 a quiet and ancient
 populace.

O! seas in a land! O! lakes of mine!
 By the love I bear and the songs I bring
 Be glad with me! lift your waves and sing
 A song in the reeds that surround your
 isles!—

Peace and sun, and
 song of harvester . . .
 A thousand miles of
 level yellow wheat.

A song of joy for this sun that smiles,
 For this land I love and this age and
 sign;
 For the peace that is and the perils pass'd;
 For the hope that is and the rest at last!

III.

THIRD DAY.—
 Greener fields to the
 north—tasseled corn,
 green rolling and
 boundless as a sea . .
 Mottled kine and clo-
 ver fields in crown of
 bees.

O heart of the world's heart! West! my
 West!
 Look up! look out! There are fields of kine,

There are clover-fields that are red as wine ;
 And a world of kine in the fields take rest,
 And ruminates in the shade of trees
 That are white with blossoms or brown with
 bees.

There are emerald seas of corn and cane ;
 There are cotton-fields like a foamy main,
 To the far-off South where the sun was born,
 Where the fair have birth and the loves
 knew morn.

Cane and cotton-
 fields towards the sun
 . . Isles of oak and
 walnut in the vast
 prairies like a sea . .

There are isles of oak and a harvest plain,
 Where brown men bend to the bending
 grain ;
 There are temples of God and towns new-
 born,
 And beautiful homes of beautiful brides ;
 And the hearts of oak and the hands of horn
 Have fashion'd them all and a world
 besides. . . .

A plastic world fash-
 ioning into another
 shape.

. A yell like the yell of the Iroquois,
 And out of Eden,—and Illinois !

IV.

FOURTH DAY.—Wigwams and tall and tawny men, scalp-locks flying from the banner lodge and warriors flying on spotted steeds.

A rush of rivers and a brush of trees,
A breath blown far from the Mexican seas,
And over the great heart-vein of earth!

. By the South-Sun-land of the
Cherokee,

By the scalp-lock-lodge of the tall Pawnee,
And up the La Platte. What a weary dearth
Of the homes of men! What a wild delight

The plains! Space!
Liberty! Silent as a
sea!

Of space! of room! What a sense of seas,
Where the seas are not! What a salt-like
breeze!

What dust and taste of quick alkali!
. Then hills! green, brown, then
black like night,

All fierce and defiant against the sky!

By night and by day! The deeps of the
night

Are rolling upon us, yet forward the flight.
Lo! darkness bends down like a mother
of grief

Mountains! En-
gines doubled, tre-
bled! you hear the
iron horses pant and
struggle in their la-
bour.

On the limitless plain, and the fall of her
hair

It has mantled a world. The stars are
in sheaf,

Yet onward we plunge like a beast in despair
Through the thick of the night; and the
thundering cars!

They have crush'd and have broken the
beautiful day;

Have crumbled it, scatter'd it far away,
And blown it above to a dust of stars.

v.

FIFTH DAY.—High
and grassy hills, wa-
ving, fresh, and bil-
lowy. Antelope, moun-
tain sheep and, buffalo.

At last! at last! O steed new-born,
Born strong of the will of the strong New
World,

We shoot to the summit, with the shafts of
morn,

Of the mount of Thunder, where clouds are
curl'd,

Below in a splendour of the sun-clad seas.

A kiss of welcome on the warm west breeze

Blows up with a smell of the fragrant pine,
 And a faint, sweet fragrance from the far-off
 seas

Comes in through the gates of the great
 South Pass

And thrills the soul like a flow of wine.

The hare leaps low in the storm-bent
 grass,

The mountain ram from his cliff looks
 back,

The brown deer hies to the tamarack;
 And afar to the South with a sound of the
 main,

Roll buffalo herds to the limitless plain. . . .

. . . Down, down, still
 and steady along the
 grassy slope; around
 the grassy hills. The
 snowy peaks around
 you seem to move and
 take position as you
 turn the curves.

On, on, o'er the summit; and onward
 again,

And down like the sea-dove the billow
 enshrouds,

And down like the swallow that dips to the
 sea,

We dart and we dash and we quiver
 and we
 Are blowing to heaven white billows of
 clouds.

VI.

SIXTH DAY. — Salt
 Lake City; a desert
 once, a garden now.
 The loveliest spot in
 America.

Thou "City of Saints!" O! antique
 men,

And men of the Desert as the men of old!
 Stand up! be glad! When the truths are
 told,

When time has utter'd his truths and when
 His hand has lifted the things to fame
 From the mass of things to be known no
 more;

When creeds have perish'd and have pass'd
 away,

Salt Lake lies some-
 times in a rim of salt
 like snow-drifts.

Opinions that lorded their little day,—

A monument set in the desert sand,
 A pyramid rear'd on an inland shore,
 And their architects—shall have place and
 name.



O! sea, land-lost! O! desolate land,
Made brown with grain, and made green
with bay;

A strange people,
brave, energetic, in-
dustrious, and deserv-
ing. These lines
were first published
when their leaders
were in prison and on
trial for life.

Let mock who will, gainsay it who may,
No little thing has it been to rear
A resting-place in the desert here,
For Fathers bound to a farther land;
No little thing with a foe at hand
That has known no peace, save with these
strong men,
And the peace unbroken with the blameless
Penn.
Let the wise be just, let the brave forbear,
Forgive their follies, nor forget their care.

VII.

SEVENTH DAY.—
Sand and sage brush!
Dust and desolation!
A line of bleaching
bones. Foxes! Jack-
rabbits! Coyotes and
horned toads!

The Humboldt desert and the alkaline
land,
And the seas of sage and of arid sand,
That stretch away till the strain'd eye carries
The soul where the infinite spaces fill,
Are far in the rear, and the fair Sierras

The summit of the
Sierras! Down, down.

Are under our feet, and the heart beats high,
And the blood comes quick ; but the lips are
still

With awe and wonder, and all the will
Is bow'd with a grandeur that frets the sky.

A line of snowy
peaks across our
course. Black and
timbered hills,

A flash of lakes through the fragrant
trees,

A song of birds and a sound of bees
Above in the boughs of the sugar-pine.
The pick-axe stroke in the placer mine,
The boom of blasts in the gold-ribb'd hills,
The grizzly's growl in the gorge below
Are dying away, and the sound of rills
From the far-off shimmering crest of snow,
The laurel green and the ivied oak,
A yellow stream and a cabin's smoke,
The brown bent hills and the shepherd's
call,

Flashing lakes and
foamy streams. Fra-
grant firs and tama-
rack. Overhanging
cliffs and snow-sheds
and shadowy forests.

Miners' cabins. Hills
of vine. Flocks. The
bay. A breath of
seas.

The hills of vine and of fruits, and all
The sweets of Eden are here, and we
Look out and afar to a limitless sea.

The sun goes down
through the Golden
Gate, and moving
ships look tall as
towers against the
glowing sky.

We have lived an age in a half-moon-wane!
We have seen a world! We have chased
the sun

From sea to sea; but the task is done.

We here descend to the great white main—
To the King of Seas, with the temples bare
And a tropic breath on the brow and hair.

We are hush'd with wonder, and all apart
We stand in silence till the heaving heart
Fills full of heaven, and then the knees
Go down in worship, on the golden sands;
With faces seaward, and with folded hands
We gaze on the beautiful Balboa seas.





ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PART I.



*Primeval forests ! virgin sod !
That Saxon hath not ravish'd yet !
Lo ! peak on peak in column set,
In stepping stairs that reach to God !*

*Here we are free as sea or wind,
For here are pitch'd the snowy tents
In everlasting battlements,
Against the march of Saxon mind.*



ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PRELUDE.



WELL! who shall lay hand on my harp
but me,
Or shall chide my song from the
sounding trees?

The passionate sun and the resolute sea,
These were my masters, and only these.

These were my masters, and only these,
And these from the first I obey'd, and they
Shall command me now, and I shall obey
As a dutiful child that is proud to please.

These were my masters, and only these,
And these from the first they were all to me—
Love if you like, reprove if you please ;
A kiss to the sun, or a curse to the sea.

There never were measures as true as the sun,
The sea hath a song that is passingly sweet,
And yet they repeat, and repeat, and repeat,
The same old runes though the new years run.

By unnamed rivers of the Oregon north,
That roll dark-heaved into turbulent hills,
I have made my home. . . The wild heart thrills
With memories, and a world storms forth.

On eminent peaks that are dark with pine,
Sable with shadows and voiced in storms,
I have made my camps : majestic grey forms
Of the thunder-clouds, they were companions of mine ;

And face set to face, like to lords austere,
Have we talk'd, red-tongued, of the mysteries
Of the circling sun, of the oracled seas,
While ye who judged me had mantled in fear.

Some fragment of thought in the unfinish'd words,
And a cry of fierce freedom—I pretend to no more;
And what more would you have from the tender of herds
And of horse on my ultimate Oregon shore?

From men unto God go ye forth, as alone,
Where the dark pines talk in their tones of the sea
To the unseen God in a harmony
Of the under seas, and know the unknown.

'Mid white Sierras, that slope to the sea,
Lie pine-crown'd peaks. Go dwell in the skies,
And the thundering tongues of Yosemite
Shall persuade you to silence, and you shall be wise.

Yea, men may deride, and the thing it is well ;
Turn well and aside from the one wild note
To the song of the bird with the tame, sweet throat ;
But the sea sings on in his cave and shell.

Let the white moons ride, let the red stars fall,
O great, sweet sea ! O fearful and sweet !
Thy songs they repeat, and repeat, and repeat :
And these, I say, shall survive us all.

I but sing for the love of song and the few
Who loved me first and shall love me last ;
And the storm shall pass as the storms have pass'd,
For never were clouds but the sun came through.





PART I.

I.



AR up in the hush of the Amazon River,
And mantled and hung in the tropical
trees,

There are isles as grand as the isles of the seas;
And waves strike strophes, and keen reeds quiver,
As the sudden canoe shoots apast them and over
The strong, still tide to the opposite shore,
Where the blue-eyed men by the sycamore
Sit mending their nets in the vine-twined cover;

II.

Sit weaving their threads of bark and of grasses,
They wind and they spin, on the clumsy wheel,
In hammocks red-hued with the cochineal,
To trade with the single black ship that passes,

With foreign freightage of curious store,
And still and slow as if half asleep—
A cunning old trader that loves to creep
Above and adown in the shade of the shore.

III.

And the blue-eyed men that are mild as the dawns,
O, delicate dawns of the grand Andes!—
Lift up soft eyes that are deep like seas,
And mild yet wild as the red-white fawns';
And they gaze into yours, then weave, then listen,
And look in wonder, then again weave on,
Then again look wonder that you are not gone,
While the keen reeds quiver and the bent waves glisten;
But they say no words while they weave and wonder,
Though they sometimes sing, voiced low like the dove,
And as deep and as rich as their tropical love,
A-weaving their net threads through and under.

IV.

Yea, a pure, true people you may trust are these,
That weave their threads where the quick leaves
quiver;

And this is their tale of the Isles of the river,
And the why that their eyes are so blue like seas—
And the why that the men draw water and bear
The wine or the water in the wild boar skin,
And do live in the woods, and do weave and spin,
And so bear with the women full burthen and share.

V.

A curious old tale of a curious old time,
That is told you betimes by a quaint old crone,
Who sits on the rim of an island alone,
As ever was told you in story or rhyme.
Her brown, bare feet dip down to the river,
And dabble and splash with her monotone,
And she holds in her hands a strange green stone,
As she talks to the boat where the bent reeds quiver.

VI.

And the quaint old crone has a singular way
Of holding her head to the side and askew,
And smoothing the stone in her palms all day,
As saying, "I've nothing at all for you,"

Till you have anointed her palm, and you
Have touch'd on the delicate spring of a door
That silver has open'd perhaps before ;
For woman is woman the wide world through.

VII.

The old near truth on the far new shore !
I bought and I paid for it ; so did you :
The tale may be false or the tale may be true ;
I give as I got it, and who can more ?
If I have purchased a beautiful lie,
And liked it well, and believed it true,
I have done it before ; and so have you,
And have been contented, and so have I.

VIII.

If I have made journeys to difficult shores,
And woven delusions in innocent verse,
If none be the wiser, why, who is the worse ?
The field it was mine, and the fruit it is yours.

IX.

A sudden told tale. You may read as you run.

A part of it hers, the remainder my own,

Crude, and too carelessly woven and thrown,

As I sail'd on the Mexican seas in the sun.

X.

She tells in her tale of a brave young knight,

A singer and knight of most knightly birth,

Aback in the darlingest days of the earth ;

O, dear old days that are lost to sight !

O, dear old days, when the hot rhymes rang

Like steel upon steel when toss'd to the sky ;

When lovers could love, when maidens could die

But never deceive, and the song-men sang

In passion as pure as the blush of the grape,

To clashing of swords, for a maiden's sigh,

Nor measured for gold as men measuring tape.

XI.

O, carpet-knight singer ! shrewd merchant of song !

Get gold and be glad, buy, sell, and be strong !

Sweet Cyprian, I kiss you, I pay you, we part :
Go ! you have my gold, but who has my heart ?
Go, splendid-made singer, so finish'd, so fair,
Go sing you of heaven, with never a prayer,
Of hearts that are aching, with never a heart,
Of Nature, all girded and bridled by art;

Go sing you of battles, with never a scar,
Of sunlight, with never a soul for the noon ;
Move cold and alone like a broken, bright moon,
And shimmer and shine like a far, cold star.

XII.

'Twas nations ago, when the Amazons were,
That a fair young knight—says the quaint old crone,
With her head sidewise, as she smooths at the stone—
Came over the seas, with his golden hair,
And a great black steed, and glittering spurs,
And a sword that had come from crusaders down,
And a womanly face in a manly frown,
And a heart as tender and as true as hers.

XIII.

And fairest and foremost in love or in war
Was the brave young knight of the brave old days,
Of all of the knights, with their knightly ways,
That had journey'd away to the world afar
In the name of Spain ; of the splendid few
Who bore her banner in the new-born world,
From the sea-rim, up where the clouds are curl'd,
And the condors beat their wings in the blue.

XIV.

He was born, says the crone, where the brave are fair,
And blown from the banks of the Guadalquiver,
And yet blue-eyed, with the Celt's soft hair,
With never a drop of the dark, deep river
Of Moorish blood that had swept through Spain,
And splash'd the world with its tawny stain,
From the Castile hills and Alhambra plain
To the far Sierras, that are white as noon,
And as fair forever as a new-born moon.

XV.

He sat on his steed, and his sword was bloody
With heathen blood; the battle was done.
And crown'd in fire, wreathed and ruddy
With antique temples built up to the sun,
Below on the plain lay the beautiful city
At the conquerors' feet; the red street strown
With dead, with gold, and gods overthrown.
His heart rebell'd and arose with pity,
He raised his head with a proud disdain,
And rein'd his steed on the reeking plain,
As the heathen pour'd, in a helpless flood,
With never a wail and with never a blow,
At last, to even provoke a foe,
Through gateways, wet with the pagan's blood.

XVI.

"Ho, forward! smite!" but the minstrel linger'd,
He reach'd his hand and he touch'd the rein,
He humm'd an air, and he toy'd and finger'd
The arching neck and the glossy mane.

XVII.

He rested the heel, he rested the hand,
Though the thing was death to the man to dare
To doubt, to question, to falter there,
Nor heeded at all to the hot command.

XVIII.

He wiped his steel on his black steed's mane,
He sheathed it deep, then look'd at the sun,
Then counted his comrades, one by one,
With booty return'd from the plunder'd plain.

XIX.

He lifted his face to the flashing snow,
He lifted his shield of steel as he sang,
And he flung it away till it clang'd and rang
On the granite rocks in the plain below,
Then cross'd his bosom. Made overbold,
He lifted his voice and sang, quite low
At first, then loud in the long-ago,
When a love endured though the days grew old.

XX.

They heard his song, the chief on the plain
 Stood up in his stirrups, and, sword in hand,
 He cursed and he call'd with a loud command
To the blue-eyed boy to return again ;
To lift his shield again to the sky,
To come and surrender his sword or die.
He wove his hand in the stormy mane,
He lean'd him forward, he lifted the rein,
He struck the flank, he wheel'd and sprang,
 And gaily rode in the face of the sun,
And bared his sword and he bravely sang,
 “ Ho ! come and take it ; ” but there came not one.

XXI.

And so he sang, with his face to the south :
 “ I shall go ; I shall search for the Amazon shore,
 Where the curses of man they are heard no more,
And kisses alone shall embrace the mouth.

XXII.

“ I shall journey in search of the Incan Isles,
 Go far and away to traditional land,
 Where Love is a queen in a crown of smiles,
 And the ruthless foot and the reckless hand
 Of man has never despoiled or trod ;
 Where woman's hand with a woman's heart
 Has fashion'd an Eden from man apart,
 And she walks in her garden alone with God.



XXIII.

“ I shall seek that Eden, and all my years
 I shall sit and repose, I shall sing in the sun ;
 And the tides may rest or the tides may run,
 And men may water the world with tears ;

#

Done
 —

XXIV.

“ And the years may come and the years may go,
 And men make war, may slay and be slain,
 But I not care, for I never shall know
 Of man, or of aught that is man's again.

#

7.

~~XXV.~~

Lark

" The waves may battle, the winds may blow,
 The mellow rich moons may ripen and fall,
 The seasons of gold they may gather or go,
 The mono may chatter, the parroquet call,

~~XXVI.~~

" And who shall take heed, take note, or shall know
 If Fates befriend, or if ill befall,
 Of worlds without, or of worlds at all,
 Of heaven above, or of hell below."

A

XXVII.

'Twas the song of a dream and the dream of a singer,
 Drawn fine as the delicate fibres of gold,
 And broken in two by the touch of a finger,
 And blown as the winds blow, rent and roll'd
 In dust, and spent as a tale that is told.

XXVIII.

Alas! for his dreams and the songs he sung :

The beasts beset him ; the tiger, awake,

And black as the night and lithe like a snake,

Stood out before him ; the serpents they hung,

Red-tongued and terrible, over his head.

He clove and he thrust with his keen, quick steel,

He coax'd with his hand and urged with his heel,

Till his steel was broken, and his steed lay dead.

XXIX.

He toil'd to the river, he lean'd intent

To the wave, and away through the fringe of boughs,

From beasts that pursued ; and breathed his vows,

For soul and body were well-nigh spent.

His arm arch'd over, as do arms on seas,

For sign, or for sound ; the thin lips press'd,

And the two hands cross'd on the helpless breast

For there came no sound through the sweep of the trees.

xxx.

'Twas the king of rivers, and the Isles were near ;
Yet it moved so strange, so still, so strong,
And gave no sound, not even the song
Of a sea-bird screaming defiance or fear.

xxxI.

It was dark and dreadful ! Wide like an ocean,
Much like a river but more like a sea,
Save that there was naught of the turbulent motion
Of tides, or of winds blown back, or a-lee.

xxxII.

Yea, strangely strong was the wave and slow,
And half-way hid in the dark, deep tide
Great turtles they paddled them to and fro,
And away to the Isles and the opposite side.

XXXIII.

The nude black boar through abundant grass
Stole down to the water and buried his nose,
And crush'd white teeth till the bubbles rose
As white and as bright as the globes of glass.

XXXIV.

Yea, steadily moved it, mile upon mile,
Above and below and as still as the air ;
The bank made slippery here and there
By the slushing slide of the crocodile.

XXXV.

The great trees bent to the tide like slaves ;
They dipp'd their boughs as the stream swept on,
And then drew back, then dipp'd and were gone,
Away to the seas with the resolute waves.

XXXVI.

The land was the tide's ; the shore was undone,
It look'd as the lawless, unsatisfied seas
Had thrust up an arm through the tangle of trees,
And clutch'd at the citrons that grew in the sun ;
And clutch'd at the diamonds that hid in the sand,
And laid heavy hand on the gold, and a hand
On the redolent fruits, on the rubies-like wine,
And the stones like the stars when the stars are divine ;
Had thrust through the rocks of the ribb'd Andes ;
Had wrested and fled ; and had left a waste
And a wide way strewn in precipitate haste,
As he bore them away to the buccaneer seas.

XXXVII.

O, heavens, the eloquent song of silence !
Asleep lay the sun in the vines on the sod,
And asleep in the sun lay the green-girdled islands,
As rock'd to their rest in the cradle of God.

XXXVIII.

God's poet is silence ! His song is unspoken,
And yet so profound, so loud, and so far,
It thrills you and fills you in measures unbroken,
And soft, and as fair, and as far as a star.

XXXIX.

The shallow seas moan. As a child they have mutter'd
And mourn'd, and have fretted and wept at their
will

The poem of God is too grand to be utter'd:
The dreadful deep seas they are loudest when still.

XL.

"I shall die," he said, "by the solemn deep river,
By the king of the rivers, and the mother of seas,
So far, so far from my Guadalquivir,
Near, and so near to the darken'd Andes.

XLI.

“ Let me sing one song by the grand old river,
And die ;” and he reach’d and he brake him a reed
From the rim of the river, where they lift and quiver,
And he trimm’d it and notch’d it well to his need
With his treacherous blade, in the sweep of the trees,
As he stood with his head bent low on his breast,
And the vines in his hair and the wave to his knees,
And bow’d like to one who would die to rest.

XLII.

“ I shall fold my hands, for this is the river
Of death,” he said, “ and the sea-green isle
Is an Eden set by the gracious Giver
Wherein to rest.” He listened the while,
Then lifted his head, then lifted a hand
Arch’d over his brow, and lean’d and listen’d—
’Twas only a bird on a border of sand—
The dark stream eddy’d, and gleam’d, and glisten’d
Stately and still as the march of a moon,

And the martial notes of the isle were gone—
Gone as a dream dies out with the dawn,
And gone as far as the night from the noon.

XLIII.

'Twas only a bird on a reach of sand,
Slow piping, and diving it here and there,
Grey and shadowy, light as the air,
That dipp'd below from a point of the land.

XLIV.

And the flashing swords they sank in the air,
When the notes were gone ; and, sadder now,
He swept his hand to his bended brow,
And cross'd his breast in a plaintive prayer.
“ Unto God a prayer and to love a tear,
And I die,” he said, “ in a desert here,
So deep that never a note is heard
But the listless song of that soulless bird.”

XLV.

He moved to a burthen of blossoms rare,
And stood in the red-white sweets to his knees—
The pink and the purple that fill the air
With fragrance sweet as a breeze of bees.

XLVI.

He crush'd the blooms to the sod untrod,
The mateless man, in an Eden, fair
As the one of old, in his fierce despair,
So hidden from man by the hand of God ;
Ay, hidden above by the vines and mosses,
And shadow'd about by the dark Andes,
And curtain'd about by the linden-trees,
Well wove and inwove in intricate crosses ;
Trees that lean'd in their love unto trees
And lock'd in their loves, and so made strong,
Stronger than armies ; stronger than seas
That rush from their caves in a storm of song.

XLVII.

“ A miser of old his last, great treasure
Flung far in the sea, and he fell and he died ;
And so shall I give, O terrible tide,
To you my song and my last sad measure.”

XLVIII.

He blew on his reed by the still, strong river,
Blew low at first, like a dream, then long,
Then loud, then loud as the keys that quiver,
And fret, and toss with their freight of song.

XLIX.

He sang and he sang with a resolute will,
Till the mono rested above on his haunches,
And held his head to the side and was still ;
Till a bird blew out of the night of branches,
Alit on a reed, and with delicate skill
Sang sadder than love, so sweeter than sad,
Till the boughs did burthen and the reeds did fill
With beautiful birds, and the boy was glad.

L.

Our loves they are told by the myriad-eyed stars,
Yet love it is well in a reasonable way,
And fame it is fair in its way for a day,
Borne dusty from books and bloody from wars ;
And death, I say, is an absolute need,
And a calm delight, and an ultimate good ;
But a song that is blown from a watery reed
By a soundless deep from a boundless wood,
With never an ear to hear or to prize
But God and the birds and the hairy wild beasts,
Is sweeter than love, than fame, or than feasts,
Or any thing else that is under the skies.

LI.

The quick leaves quiver'd, and the sunlight danced,
As the boy sang sweet, and the birds said " Sweet ;"
And the tiger crept close, and lay low at his feet,
And he sheath'd his claws in the sun, entranced.

LII.

The serpent that hung from the sycamore bough,
And sway'd his head in a crescent above,
Had folded his neck to the white limb now,
And fondled it close like a great black love.

LIII.

But the hands grew weary, the heart wax'd faint,
The loud notes fell to a far off plaint,
The sweet birds echo'd no more "O sweet,"
The tiger arose and unsheath'd his claws,
The serpent extended his iron jaws,
The frail reed shiver'd and fell at his feet.

LIV.

A sound on the tide, and he turned and cried,
"Oh, give God thanks, for they come, they come!"
He look'd out afar on the opaline tide,
Then clasp'd his hands, and his lips were dumb.

LV.

A sweeping swift crescent of sudden canoes !

As light as the sun of the south and as soon,

And true and as still as a sweet half-moon

That leans from the heavens, and loves and woos,

LVI.

The Amazons came in their martial pride,

As full on the stream as a studding of stars,

All girded in armour as girded in wars,

In foamy white furrows dividing the tide.

LVII.

With a face as brown as the boatmen's are,

Or the brave, brown hand of a harvester ;

And girdled in gold, and crown'd in hair

In a storm of night, all studded with rare

Rich stones, that fretted the full of a noon,

The Queen on a prow stood splendid and tall,

As petulant waters would lift, and fall,

And beat, and bubble a watery rune :

LVIII.

Stood forth for the song, half lean'd in surprise,
Stood fair to behold, and yet grand to behold,
And austere in her face, and saturnine-soul'd,
And sad and subdued, in her eloquent eyes.

LIX.

And sad were they all; yet tall and serene
Of presence, but silent, and brow'd severe
As for some things lost, or for some fair, green,
And beautiful place, to the memory dear.

LX.

“O, Mother of God! Thrice merciful saint!
I am saved!” he said, and he wept outright;
Ay, wept as even a woman might,
For the soul was full and the heart was faint.

LXI.

“ Stay! stay!” cried the Queen, and she leapt to the
land,

And she lifted her hand, and she lower’d their spears,
A woman! a woman! ho! help! give a hand.

“ A woman! a woman! we know by the tears.”

LXII.

Then gently as touch of the truest of woman,
They lifted him up from the earth as he fell,
And into the boat, with a half-hidden swell
Of the heart that was holy and tenderly human.
And they spoke low-voiced as a vesper prayer,
And they pillow’d his head as only the hand
Of a woman can pillow, and push’d from the land,
As the Queen she sat threading the gold of his hair.

LXIII.

Then away with the wave, and away to the Isles,
In a song of the oars of the crescented fleet,
That timed together in musical wiles,
And a bubble of melodies swift and sweet.



ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PART II.



*Forsake the city. Follow me
To where the white caps of a sea
Of mountains break and break again,
As blown in foam against a star—
As breaks the fury of a main—
And there remains, as fix'd, as far.*

*Forsake the people. What are they
That laugh, that live and love, by rule?
Forsake the Saxon. What are these
That shun the shadows of the trees:
The Druid-forests? . . . Go thy way,
We are not one. I will not please
You;—fare you well, O wiser fool!*

*But you who love me;—Ye who love
The shaggy forests, fierce delights
Of sounding waterfalls, of heights
That hang like broken moons above,
With brows of pine that brush the sun,
Believe and follow. We are one;
The wild man shall to us be tame;
The woods shall yield their mysteries;
The stars shall answer to a name,
And be as birds above the trees.*



ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PRELUDE.

IN the days when my mother, the Earth,
was young,
And you all were not, nor the likeness
of you,
She walk'd in her maidenly prime among
The moonlit stars in the boundless blue.

Then the great sun lifted his shining shield,
And he flash'd his sword as the soldiers do,
And he moved like a king full over the field,
And he look'd, and he lov'd her brave and true.

And looking afar from the ultimate rim,
As he lay at rest in a reach of light,
He beheld her walking alone at night,
Where the buttercup stars in their beauty swim.

So he rose up flush'd in his love, and he ran,
And he reach'd his arms, and around her waist
He wound them strong like a love-struck man,
And he kiss'd and embraced her, brave and chaste.

So he nursed his love like a babe at its birth,
And he warm'd in his love as the long years ran,
Then embraced her again, and sweet mother Earth
Was a mother indeed, and her child was man.

The sun is the sire, the mother is earth !
What more do you know ? what more do I need ?
The one he begot, and the one gave birth,
And I love them both, and let laugh at your creed.

And who shall pronounce that the child of the sun,
With his rich sun-worship, was utterly wrong
In the far, new years when the stars kept song? . . .
. . . But judge, and be judged . . . Condemn, and
have done.

And who shall proclaim they were rude and unwise
In their great, warm faith? Time answers us not:
The quick fool questions; but who replies?
The wise man hesitates, hush'd in thought.





PART II.

1.



AS strong as a love, and as swift as a
dove

When love of her little ones hastens
her home,

They swept to the Isles through the furrows of
foam,

And alit on the land as if blown from above.

Then below the banana, with leaf like a tent,

They tenderly laid him, they bade him take rest ;

They brought him strange fishes and fruits of the
best,

And he ate and took rest with a patient content.

II.

They watch'd with him well, and he rose up strong ;
He stood in their midst, and they said, " How fair !"
And they said, " How tall !" And they toy'd with
his hair,
And they touch'd his limbs, and they said, " How long !
And how strong they are ; and how brave she is,
That she made her way through the wiles of man,
That she braved his wrath, that she broke the ban
Of his desolate life for the loves of this !"

III.

They wove for him garments with womanly pride,
But he held his head with a sense of shame
That the sexes were not, man, woman, the same,
And he pursed his brow and he push'd them aside.

IV.

They wrought for him armour of cunning attire,
They brought him a sword and a great shell shield,
And implored him to shiver the lance on the field,
And to follow their beautiful Queen in her ire.

V.

But he took him apart, and the Amazons came
And entreated of him with their eloquent eyes
And their earnest and passionate souls of flame,
And the soft, sweet words that are broken of sighs,
To be one of their own, but he still denied,
And he warr'd with himself, and his chivalrous heart
Arose and rebell'd at the treacherous part
He play'd for his life ; and he grew to despise
The thought of himself with a shudder of shame,
And bow'd and abash'd he stole farther aside.

VI.

He stood by the palms and he lean'd in unrest,
And standing alone, look'd out and afar,
For his own fair land where the castles are,
With irresolute arms on a restless breast.

VII.

He relived his loves, and recall'd his wars,
He gazed and he gazed with a soul distress'd,
Like a far sweet star that is lost in the west,
Till the day was broken to a dust of stars.

VIII.

They sigh'd, and they left him alone in the care
Of faithfullest matron; they moved to the field
With the lifted sword and the sounding shield
High fretting magnificent storms of hair.

IX.

And, true as the moon in her march of stars,
The Queen stood forth in her fierce attire
Worn as they train'd, or worn in the wars,
As bright and as chaste as a flash of fire.

X.

With girdles of gold and of silver cross'd,
And plaited, and chased, and bound together,
Broader and stronger than belts of leather,
Cunningly fashion'd and blazon'd and boss'd—
With diamonds circling her, stone upon stone,
Above the breast where the borders fail,
Below the breast where the fringes zone,
She moved in a glittering garment of mail.

XI.

The form made hardy and the waist made spare
From athlete sports and adventures bold,
The breastplate, fasten'd with clasps of gold,
Was clasp'd, as close as the breasts could bear.—
And bound and drawn to a delicate span,
It flash'd in the red front ranks of the field—
Was fashion'd full trim in its intricate plan
And gleam'd as a sign, as well as a shield,
That the virgin Queen was unyielding still,
And pure as the tides that around her ran ;
True to her trust, and strong in her will
Of war, and hatred to the touch of man.

XII.

The field it was theirs in storm or in shine,
So fairly they stood that the foe came not
To the battle again, and the fair forgot
The rage of battle ; and they trimm'd the vine,
They tended the fields of tall green corn,
They crush'd the grape, and they drew the wine
In great round gourds or the bended horn,
And seem'd as souls that are half divine.

XIII.

They bathed in the wave in the amber morn,
They took repose in the peaceful shade
Of eternal palms, and were never afraid ;
Yet still did they sigh, and look far and forlorn.

XIV.

Then down where the wave by the white sands ran
And left them laved with kisses, and these
They journey'd away with the caravan
Of the grand old tide to the grander seas.—
Where the rim of the wave was weaving a spell,
And the grass grew soft where it hid from the sun,
Would the Amazons gather them every one
At the call of the Queen or the sound of her shell.

XV.

They would come in strides through the kingly trees,
And train and marshal them brave and well
In the golden noon, in the hush of peace
Where the shifting shades of the fan-palms fell ;

They would lean on their long quick quivering swords ;
They would rest on their shields in a line at the side ;
They would lift their brows to the front and tow'ards
Their Queen as she moved in her matchless pride.

XVI.

They would train till flush'd and as warm as wine,
They would reach with their limbs, would thrust
with the lance,
Attack, retire, retreat and advance,
Then wheel in column, then fall in line ;
Stand thigh and thigh with the limbs made hard
And rich and round as the swift-limb'd pard,
Or a racer train'd, or a white bull caught
In the lasso's toils, where the tame are not.

XVII.

Would curve as the waves curve, swerve in line ;
Would dash through the trees, would train with the
bow,
Then back to the lines, now sudden, then slow,
Then flash their swords in the sun at a sign ;

Would settle the foot right firm afront,
Then sound the shield till the sound was heard
Afar, as the horn in the black boar hunt ;
Yet, stranger than all, say never a word.

XVIII.

And as bold of heart, as supple of limb,
They would test their strength in the wrestle or
race,
They would thread the forest, would dive or swim,
And sudden and swift would spring to the chase ;
Would brave the jungles, would beard the beast
In tangle of wood, at bay in his den ;
And alone or in troop, in fray or at feast,
Would bear them as bravely as ever did men ;

XIX.

They were out with the morn, till mantled in night
Were reckless of danger and careless of toil ;
Would bear to the village the shaggy-hair'd spoil,
And shout and lift hands and return in delight.

When shadows fell far from the westward, and when
The sun had kiss'd hands and made sail for the east,
They would kindle the fires and gather them then,
Well-worn and most merry with song, to the feast.

XX.

There feasting in circles, they sang of the sun,
Their prowess or valour, in peril or pain ;
Till the Isles were awake and the birds were outdone ;
And long ere the dawn were up singing again.
They sang of all things, but the one, sacred one,
That could make them most glad, as they lifted the
gourd
And pass'd it around, with its rich purple hoard,
From the Island that lay with its front to the sun.

XXI.

Though lips were made luscious, and eyes as divine
As the eyes of the skies that bend down from above ;
Though hearts were made glad and most mellow
with love,
As dripping gourds drain'd of their burthens of wine ;

Though brimming, and dripping, and bent of their
shape

Were the generous gourds from the juice of the grape,
They could sing not of love, they could breathe not a
thought

Of the savour of life ; love sought, or unsought.

XXII.

Their loves they were not ; they had banish'd the name
Of man, and the uttermost mention of love—

The moonbeams about them, the quick stars above,
And the mellow-voiced winds, they were ever the same,
In sign, and in saying, of the old true lies ;

But they took no heed ; no answering sign,
Save glances averted and half-hush'd sighs,
Went back from the breasts with their loves divine.

XXIII.

They sang of their freedom with a will, and well—

They paid for it well when the price was blood ;
They beat on the shield, and they blew on the shell,
When their wars were not, for they held it good

To be glad and to sing till the flush of the day,
In an annual feast, when the broad leaves fell ;
Yet some sang not, and some sigh'd " Ah well !"—
For there's far less left you to sing or to say,
When mettlesome love is banish'd, I ween,
To hint at as hidden, or half disclose
In the swift sword-cuts of the tongue, made keen
With wine at a feast, than one would suppose.

XXIV.

So the days wore by, but they brought no rest
To the minstrel knight, though the sun was gold,
And the Isles were green, and the Amazons blest
In the splendour of arms, and as pure as bold.

XXV.

He now would resolve to reveal to her all,
His sex and his race in a well-timed song ;
And his love of peace, his hatred of wrong,
And his own deceit, though the sun should fall.

XXVI.

Then again he would linger, and knew not how
He could best proceed, and deferr'd him now
Till a favourite day, then the fair day came,
And still he delayed, and reproach'd him the same.

XXVII.

Then again he did vow to reveal full soon,
Then deeply he blush'd, then upbraided sore
The winds that had blown from the Castile shore,
And walk'd by the waves in the great white moon.

XXVIII.

He still said nought, but subduing his head,
He wander'd by day in a dubious spell
Of unutterable thought of the truth unsaid,
To the indolent shore ; and he gather'd a shell,
And he shaped its point to his passionate mouth,
And he turn'd to a bank and began to blow,
While the Amazons train'd in a troop below,
And as soft and as sweet as the kiss of the South.

XXIX.

It stirr'd their souls, and they ceased to train
In troop by the shore, as the tremulous strain
Fell down from the hill through the tasselling trees ;
And a murmur of song like the sound of bees
In the clover crown of a queenly spring,
Came back unto him, and he laid the shell
Aside on the bank, and began to sing
Of eloquent love ; and the ancient spell
Of passionate song was his, and the Isle,
As waked to delight from its slumber long,
Came back in echoes ; yet all this while
He knew not at all the sin of his song.

XXX.

Then the Amazons lifted with glad surprise,
Stood splendid at first and look'd far and fair
Set forward a foot and shook back their hair,
Like clouds push'd back from the sunlit skies.



ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PART III.



*I know upon this earth a spot
Where clinking coins, that clink as chains
Upon the souls of men, are not ;
Nor man is measured for his gains
Of gold that stream with crimson stains.*

*The rivers run unmaster'd yet,
Unmeasured sweep their sable brede :
The pampas unpossess'd is set
With stormy banners of her steeds,
That rival man in martial deeds.*

*The snow-topp'd towers crush the clouds
And break the still abode of stars,
Like sudden ghosts in snowy shrouds,
New broken through their earthy bars ;
And condors whet with crooked beaks
The lofty limits of the peaks.*

*O men that fret as frets the main !
You irk one with your eager gaze
Down in the earth for fat increase—
Eternal talks of gold and gain,
Your shallow wit, your shallow ways . . .
And breaks my soul across the shoal
As breakers break on shallow seas.*



ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PRELUDE.



O! Isles of the Incas! Amazon Isles
The sun has loved you, clothed and
crown'd,

And touch'd you tenderly, girt you round
With a sunset wave in a wealth of smiles.

It is swift, it is sweet when born of a kiss,
And who shall marvel, and who shall chide
That the sun-loved children should turn aside
To the love of the sun for a love like this?

O Isles of a wave in an ocean of wood !

O white waves lost in the wilds I love !

Let the red stars rest on your breast from above,
And sing to the sun, for his love it is good.

He has made you his heirs, he has given you gold,

And wrought for you garments of limitless green,

With beautiful bars of the scarlet between,

And of silver seams fretting you fold on fold.

He has kiss'd and caress'd you, loved you true,

Yea, loved as a god loves, loved as I

Shall learn to love when the stars shall lie

Like blooms at my feet in a field of blue.





PART III.



I.



HEY bared their brows to the palms
above,
But some look'd level into comrade's eyes,
And they then remember'd that the thought of love
Was the thing forbidden, and they sank in sighs.

II.

They turn'd from the training, to heed in throng
To the old, old tale ; and they train'd no more,
As he sang of love ; and some on the shore,
And full in the sound of the eloquent song,

With a womanly air and irresolute will
Went listlessly onward as gathering shells ;
Then gazed in the waters, mirror'd themselves,
Put back their hair and sigh'd, and were still.

III.

And they said no word. Some tapp'd on the sand
With the sandal'd foot, keeping time to the sound,
In a sort of dream ; some timed with the hand,
And one held eyes full of tears to the ground,
As the tide of years turn'd stormy and strong,
With its freightage of wrecks, and impossible things,
And a flood of far memories, born of the song,
And borne to the heart on articulate wings.

IV.

She thought of the days when their wars were not,
As she lean'd and listen'd to the old, old song,
When they sang of their loves, and she well forgot
The hard oppressions and a world of wrong.

Like a pure true woman, with her trust in tears
And the things that are true, she relived them in
thought,
Though hush'd and crush'd in the fall of the years ;
She lived but the fair, and the false she forgot
As a tale long told, or as things that are dreams ;
And the quivering curve of the lip confest
The silent regrets, and a soul that teems
With a world of love in a brave true breast.

V.

Then this one younger, who had known no love,
Nor look'd upon man but in blood on the field,
She bow'd her head, and she lean'd on her shield,
And her heart beat quick as the wings of a dove
That is blown from the sea, where the rests are not
In the time of storms ; and by instinct taught
Grew pensive, and sigh'd ; and she thought and
thought
Of some wonderful things, and—she knew not of what.

VI.

Then this one thought of a love forsaken,
Thought of a brown sweet babe, and thought
Of the bread-fruits gather'd, of swift fish taken
In intricate nets, like a love well sought.

VII.

She thought of the moons of her maiden dawn,
Mellow'd and fair with the forms of man ;
So dearer indeed to dwell upon
Than beautiful waves that around her ran ;
Fairer indeed than the fringes of light
That lie at rest on the west of the sea
In furrows of foam on the borders of night,
And dearer indeed than the songs to be—
Than calling of dreams from the opposite land,
To the land of life, and journeyings dreary
When the soul goes over from the form grown
weary,
And walks in the cool of the trees on the strand.

VIII.

But the Queen was enraged and would smite him at first
With the sword unto death, yet it seem'd that she durst
Not touch him at all ; and she moved as to chide,
And she lifted her face, and frown'd at his side,
Then touch'd on his arm ; she look'd in his eyes
And right full in his soul, but she saw no fear
In the pale fair face, and with frown severe
She press'd her lips as suppressing her sighs.

IX.

She banish'd her wrath, she unbended her face,
She lifted her hand and put back his hair
From his fair sad brow, with a penitent air,
And forgave him all with an unutter'd grace ;
For she said no word. Yet no more was severe ;
She stood as subdued by the side of him still,
Then averted her face with a resolute will,
As to hush a regret, or to hide back a tear.

X.

She sigh'd to herself: "A stranger is this,
And ill and alone, that knows not at all
That a throne shall totter and the strong shall fall,
At the mention of love and its banefullest bliss.
O life that is lost in bewildering love—
But a stranger is sacred!" She lifted a hand
And she laid it as soft as the breast of a dove
On the minstrel's mouth; it was more than the wand
Of the tamer of serpents; for she did no more
Than to bid with her eyes and to beck with her hand,
And the song drew away to the waves of the shore;
Took wings, as it were, to the verge of the land.

XI.

But her heart was oppress'd. With penitent head
She turn'd to her troop, and, retiring, she said:
"Alas! and alas! Shall it come to pass
That the panther shall die from a blade of grass?"

That the tiger shall yield at the bent-horn blast?

That we, who have conquered a world and all

Of men and of beasts in the world, must fall

Ourselves, at the mention of love, at last ? ”

XII.

The singer was fretted, and farther apart

He wander'd, perplex'd ; he felt his heart

Beat quick and troubled, and all untamed,

As he saw her move with marvellous grace

To her troop below ; he turn'd from his place,

Oppress'd and humbled, and sore ashamed

That he lived in the land in the shield of a lie ;

That he dared not stand forth face to face

To the truth, and die as a knight should die.

XIII.

The tall brown Queen, when turn'd to her troop,

Led minstrel and all to the innermost part

Of the palm-crown'd Isle, where great trees group

In armies, to battle when black storms start,

And made her retreat from the sun by the trees
That are topped like tents, where the fire-flies
Are a light to the feet, and a fair lake lies
As cool as the coral-set centres of seas.

XIV.

Here Nature was good, she gave to her lover
Yet warm from her bosom the all that she had,
And fair as the beautiful skies above her,
She only demanded that he should love her
Full well in return, and so be glad.
And here the carpet of Nature was spread,
Made pink with blossoms and fragrant bloom;
Her soft couch canopied overhead,
Allured to sleep with the deep perfume.

XV.

The sarsaparilla had woven its thread
So through and through, like the threads of gold;
'Twas stronger than thongs in its thousandfold,
And on every hand and up overhead

Ran thick as threads on the rim of a reel,
Through red leaf and dead leaf, bough and vine,
The green and the grey leaf, coarse and fine,
And the cactus tinted with cochineal.

XVI.

And every colour that the Master Sun
Has painted and hung in the halls of God,
Blush'd in the boughs or spread on the sod,
Pictured and woven and wound as one.
The tamarind and the cocoa-tree,
The quick cinchona, the red sangre,
The keen caressa, the sycamore,
Were woof and warp as wide as the shore.

XVII.

Here palm-trees lorded the copse like kings,
Their tall tops tossing the indolent clouds
That folded the Isle in the dawn like shrouds,
Then fled from the sun like living things.

The cockatoo swung in the vines below,
And muttering hung on a golden thread,
Or moved on the moss'd bough to and fro,
In plumes of gold and array'd in red.

XVIII.

The lake lay hidden away from the light,
As asleep in the Isle from the tropical noon,
And narrow and bent like a new-born moon,
And fair as a moon in the noon of the night.

XIX.

'Twas shadow'd by forests, and fringed by ferns,
And fretted anon by the fishes that leapt
At indolent flies that slept or kept
Their drowsy tones on the tide by turns.

XX.

And here in the dawn when the day was strong
And newly aroused from leafy repose,
With dew on his feet and tints of the rose
In his great flush'd face, was a sense and song

That the tame old world has nor known nor heard ;

The soul was fill'd with the soft perfumes,
The eloquent wings of the humming bird
Beguiled the heart, they purpled the air
And allured the eye, as so everywhere
On the rim of the wave, or across it in swings,
They swept or they sank in a sea of blooms,
And wove and wound in a song of wings.

XXI.

The senses drank of the fragrance deep,
The glad soul question'd it whether or no
It had risen above or yet dwelt below,
Or whether to laugh for love or to weep.

XXII.

A bird in scarlet and gold, made mad
With sweet delights, through the branches slid
And kiss'd the lake on a drowsy lid
Till the ripples ran and the face was glad :

XXIII.

Was glad and lovely as lights that sweep
The face of heaven when stars are forth
In autumn time through the awful north,
Or the face of a child when it smiles in sleep.

XXIV.

And here was the Queen, in the tropical noon,
When the wave and the world and all were asleep,
And nothing look'd forth to betray or peep
Through glories of jungle in garments of June,
To bathe with her court in the waters that bent
In the beautiful lake through tasseling trees,
And the tangle of blooms in a burden of bees,
As bold and as sharp as a bow unspent.

XXV.

And strangely still, and more strangely sweet,
Was the lake that lay in its cradle of fern,
As still as a moon with her horns that turn
In the night, like lamps to some delicate feet.

XXVI.

They came and they stood by the brink of the tide,
They hung their shields on the boughs of the trees,
They lean'd their lances against the side,
Unloosed their sandals, and busy as bees
That ply with industrious wing perfumes,
Ungather'd their robes in the rustle of leaves
And nodding of reeds and the beautiful blooms
That wound them as close as the wine-vine weaves.

XXVII.

The minstrel had falter'd, and further aside
Than ever before he averted his head ;
He pick'd up a pebble and fretted the tide,
Then turn'd with a countenance flush'd and red.

XXVIII.

He feign'd him ill, he wandered away,
And sat him down by the waters alone,
And prayed for pardon, as a knight should pray,
And rued an error not all his own.

XXIX.

The Amazons press'd to the girdle of reeds,
Two and by two they advanced to the wave,
They challenged each other, and bade be brave,
And banter'd, and vaunted of valorous deeds.

XXX.

They push'd and they parted the curtains of green,
All timid at first ; then look'd at the wave
And laugh'd ; retreated, then came up brave
To the brink of the water, led on by their Queen.

XXXI.

Again they retreated, again advanced,
And parted the boughs in a proud disdain,
Then bent their heads to the waters, and glanced
Below, then blush'd, and then laugh'd again ;

XXXII.

A bird awaken'd, then all dismay'd
They shrank to the leaves and the sombre shade
With a womanly sense of a beautiful shame
That strife and changes had left the same.

XXXIII.

At last, press'd forward a beautiful pair
And bent to the wave, and bending they blush'd
As rich as the wines, when the waters rush'd
To the dimpled limbs, and laugh'd in their hair.

XXXIV.

The fair troop follow'd with shouts and cheers,
They cleft the wave, and the friendly ferns
Came down in curtains and curves and turns,
And a brave palm lifted a thousand spears.

XXXV.

From under the ferns and away from the land,
And out in the wave until lost below,
There lay, as white as a bank of snow,
A long and a beautiful border of sand.

XXXVI.

Here clothed alone in their clouds of hair
And curtain'd about by the palm and fern,
And made as their Maker had made them, fair,
And splendid of natural grace and turn ;

XXXVII.

Untrammell'd by art and untroubled by man
They tested their strength, or tried their speed,
And here they wrestled, and there they ran,
As supple and lithe as the watery reed.

XXXVIII.

The great trees shadow'd the bow-tipp'd tide,
And nodded their plumes from the opposite side,
As if to whisper, Take care! take care!
But the meddlesome sunshine here and there,

XXXIX.

Kept pointing a finger right under the trees,—
Kept shifting the branches and wagging a hand
At the round brown limbs on the border of sand,
And seem'd to whisper, Ho! what are these?

XL.

The gold-barr'd butterflies to and fro
And over the waterside wander'd and wove
As heedless and idle as clouds that rove
And drift by the peaks of perpetual snow.

XLI.

A monkey swung out from a bough in the skies,
White-whisker'd and ancient, and wisest of all
Of his populous race, and he heard them call
And he watch'd them long, with his head sideways,
From under his brows of amber and brown,
Patient and silent and never once stirr'd ;
Then shook his head and he hasten'd him down
To his army below and said never a word.





ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PART IV.



*There is many a love in the land, my love,
But never a love like this is ;
Then kill me dead with your love, my dove,
And cover me up with kisses.*



ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PRELUDE.



T seems to me that Mother Earth

Is weary from eternal toil

And bringing forth by fretted soil

In all the agonies of birth.

Sit down! sit down! Lo! it were best

That we should rest, that she should rest!

Let buffalo possess the land,

Let foxes populate the towns,

And wild deer wander through the downs.

Here we will laugh, nor lift a hand;

And laugh that man should ever care

For flock or field or mansion fair!

No ship shall founder in the seas,
Nor soldier fall in martial line,
Nor miner perish in the mine.
Here we shall tent beneath the trees,
Where wife nor maid shall wait or weep,
For Earth shall sleep, and all shall sleep.

I think we then should all be glad,
At least I know we are not now ;
Not one. And even Earth somehow
Seems growing old and over sad.
Then fold your hands, for it were best
That we should rest, that she should rest.





PART IV.

I.



HE minstrel he took him apart from the
place,
Look'd up in the boughs at the gold
birds there,

He counted the humming-birds fretting the air,
And brush'd at the butterflies fanning his face.

He sat him down in a crook of the wave

And away from the Amazons, under the skies
Where great trees curved in a leaf-lined cave,

And lifted his hands and shaded his eyes,
And held his head to the north when they came
To run on the reaches of sand from the south
And pull'd at his chin, and pursed his mouth,
And shut his eyes with a shudder of shame.

He reach'd from the bank and he brake him a reed—
A bamboo reed—from the border below,
He pith'd it and trimm'd it with all his speed,
And lifted it up and began to blow
As if to himself; as the sea sometimes
Does soothe and soothe in a low, sweet song,
When his rage is spent, and the beach swells strong
With sweet repetitions of alliterate rhymes.

II.

The echoes blew back from the indolent land;
Silent and still sat the tropical bird,
And only the sound of the reed was heard,
As the Amazons ceased from their sports on the sand.

III.

They rose from the wave, and inclining the head,
They listen'd intent, with the delicate tip
Of the finger touch'd to the pouting lip,
Till the brown Queen turn'd in the tide, and led

Through the opaline lake, and under the shade,
And along the shore, and below the ferns
Where the bent boughs reach'd and return'd by turns,
To the shore where the chivalrous singer played.

IV.

He bended his head and he shaded his eyes
As well as he might with his lifted fingers,
And ceased to sing ; then in mute surprise,
He saw them linger as a child that lingers
Allured by a song thrown down to the street,
That looks bewilder'd about from its play,
For the last loved notes that fall at its feet,
And he heard them whisper, he saw them sway
Aside and before and silent and sweet.

V.

The soft notes swell'd, and the air swept loud,
They drew to the sound as if borne in a dream,
As blown in the purple and gold of a cloud,
Or borne on the breast of a crystalline stream.

VI.

But the singer was vexed ; he averted his head ;
He lifted his eyes to the mosses aside
For a brief, little time, but they turn'd to the tide
In spite of his will, or of prayers well said.

VII.

He press'd four fingers against each lid,
Till the light was gone ; yet for all that he did
It seem'd that the lithe forms lay and beat
Afloat in his face and full under his feet.

VIII.

He seem'd to see the beautiful breasts,
And the rounded limbs in their pure unrests—
To see them swim as the mermaid swims,
With the drifting dimpled, delicate limbs,
Folded and hidden in robes of hair ;
While fishes of gold shot here and there
Below their breasts and above their feet,
Like birds in a beautiful garden of sweet.

IX.

It seems to me there is more that sees
Than the eyes in man ; you may close your eyes,
You may turn your back, and may still be wise
In sacred and marvellous mysteries.

X.

He saw as one sees the sun of a noon
In the sun-kiss'd south, when the eyes are closed—
He saw as one sees the bars of a moon
That fall through the boughs of the tropical trees,
When he lies at length, and is all composed,
And asleep in his hammock by the sundown seas.

XI.

He heard the waters bubble and fret ;
He lifted his eyes, yet ever they lay
Afloat in the tide ; he turn'd him away
And resolved to fly and for aye to forget.

K

XII.

He rose up strong, and he cross'd him twice,
He nerved his heart and he lifted his head,
He crush'd the treacherous reed in a trice,
With an angry foot, and he turn'd and fled ;

XIII.

And flying, confused like a pitiful slave,
He question'd himself most sore as he fled,
If he most was a knight, or most was a knave—
And flying he hurriedly turn'd his head
Back over his shoulder, and sudden aside,
With an eager glance, with meddlesome eyes,
As a woman will turn : and he saw arise
The beautiful queen from the silvery tide.
She toss'd her hair, and she turn'd her eyes
With all their splendour to his as he fled,
And all their glory, and a strange surprise,
And a sad reproach and a world unsaid.

XIV.

He beat on their shields, they rose in array,
As aroused from a trance, and hurriedly came
From out of the wave and he wander'd away,
Fretting his sensitive soul with blame,
Until all array'd ; then ill and opprest,
And bitterly cursing the treacherous reed,
Return'd with his hand on his turbulent breast,
And struck to the heart, and most ill indeed.

XV.

Alone he would sit in the shadows at noon,
Alone he would sit by the waters at night ;
Would sing sad-voiced, as a woman might,
With pale, kind face to the cold, pale moon.

XVI.

He would here advance, and would there retreat,
As a petulant child that has lost its way
In the redolent walks of a sultry day,
And wanders around with irresolute feet.

XVII.

He would press his hand in pain to his heart,
He would fold his hands, he would toss his hair
From his brow, then turn to the palms, and apart
From eyes that pursued, with a pitiful air.

XVIII.

He made him a harp of mahogany wood,
He strung it well with the sounding strings
Of the ostrich thews, from the ostrich wings,
And play'd and sang in a sad sweet rune.
He hang'd his harp in the vines, and stood
By the tide at night, in the palms at noon,
And lone as a ghost in the shadowy wood.

XIX.

Then, two grew sad, and alone sat she
By the great, strong stream, and she bow'd her head,
Then lifted her face to the tide and said,
" O pure as a tear and as strong as a sea
Yet tender to me as the touch of a dove,

I had rather sit sad and alone by thee,
Than to go and be glad, with a legion in love.”
She sat sometime at the wanderer’s side
As the kingly water went wandering by ;
And the two once look’d, and they knew not why,
Full sad in each other’s eyes, and they sigh’d.

XX.

She courted the solitude under the rim
Of trees that reach’d to the resolute stream,
And gazed in the waters as one in a dream,
Till her soul grew heavy and her eyes grew dim
To the fair delights of her own fair Isles.
She turn’d her face to the stranger again,
He cheer’d with song and allured with smiles,
But cheer’d, and allured, and soothed in vain.

XXI.

She bow’d her head with a beautiful grief
That grew from her pity ; she forgot her arms,
And she made neglect of the battle alarms
That threaten’d the land ; the banana’s leaf

Made shelter ; he lifted his harp again,
She sat, she listen'd intent and long,
Forgetting her care and forgetting her pain—
Made sad for the singer, made glad from his song.

XXII.

But the braves waxed cold ; the white moons waned,
And the brown Queen marshall'd them never once
more,
With sword and with shield, in the palms by the
shore ;
But they sat them down to repose, or remained
Apart and scatter'd in the tropic-leaf'd trees,
As sadden'd by song, or for loves delay'd,
Or away in the Isle in couples they stray'd,
Not at all content in their Isles of peace.

XXIII.

They wander'd away to the lakes once more,
Or walk'd in the moon, or they sigh'd, or slept,
Or they sat in pairs by the shadowy shore,
And silent song with the waters kept.

XXIV.

There was one who stood by the waters one eve,
With the stars on her hair, and the bars of the moon
Broken up at her feet by the bountiful boon
Of extending old trees, who did questioning grieve :

“ The birds they go over us two and by two ;
The mono is mated ; his bride in the boughs
Sits nursing his babe, and his passionate vows
Of love, you may hear them the whole day through.

“ The lizard, the cayman, the white-toothed boar,
The serpents that glide in the sword-leaf'd grass,
The beasts that abide or the birds that pass,
They are glad in their loves as the green-leaf'd shore.

“ There is nothing that is that can yield one bliss
Like an innocent love ; the leaves have tongue
And the tides talk low in the reeds, and the young
And the quick buds open their lips but for this.

“ In the steep and the starry silences,
On the stormy levels of the limitless seas,
Or here in the deeps of the dark-brow'd trees,
There is nothing so much as a brave man's kiss.

“ There is nothing so strong, in the stream, on the land,
In the valley of palms, on the pinnacled snow,
In the clouds of the gods, on the grasses below,
As the silk-soft touch of a baby's brown hand.

“ It were better to sit and to spin on a stone
The whole year through with a babe at the knee,
With its brown hands reaching caressingly,
Than to sit in a girdle of gold and alone—

“ Than the life like to this, where never the brown
Sweet hand of a babe hides back in the hair
When mother comes home with her burthen of care,
And over the life of her life bends down.

“ It were better perhaps to be mothers of men,
And to murmur not much ; there are clouds in the
sun.

Can woman undo what the gods have done ?
Nay, the things must be as the things have been.”

XXV.

They wander'd well forth, some here and some there,
Unsatisfied some and irresolute all.
The sun was the same, the moonlight did fall
Rich-barr'd and refulgent ; the stars were as fair
As ever were stars ; the fruitful clouds cross'd
And the harvest fail'd not ; yet the fair Isle grew
As a prison despised, and they search'd on through
The magnificent shades as for things that were lost.

XXVI.

The minstrel, more pensive, went deep in the wood,
And oft-time delay'd him the whole day through,
As charm'd by the deeps, or the sad heart drew
Some solaces sweet from the solitude.

XXVII.

The singer forsook them at last, and the Queen
Came seldom then forth from the fierce deep wood,
And her warriors, dark-brow'd and bewildering stood
In bands by the wave in the complicate screen
Of overbent boughs. They would lean on their spears
And would talk sometimes low-voiced and by twos,
As allured by longings they could not refuse,
And would sidewise look, as beset by their fears.

XXVIII.

They wander'd on thus as the day waxed full,
All listless and slow, and spurning the shells
With brown sandall'd feet, to the whimsical swells
Of the wine-dark wave with its foam like wool.

XXIX.

Once, wearied and sad, by the shadowy trees
In the flush of the sun they sank to their rests,
The dark hair veiling the beautiful breasts
That arose in billows, as mists veil seas.

XXX.

Then away to the dream-world one and by one ;
The great red sun in his purple was roll'd,
And red-wing'd birds and the birds of gold
Were above in the trees like the beams of the sun.

XXXI.

Then the sun came down, with his ladders of gold
Built up of his beams, and the souls arose
And ascended on these, and the fair repose
Of the negligent forms was a feast to behold.

XXXII.

The round brown limbs they were reached or drawn,
The grass made dark with the fervour of hair ;
And here were the rose-red lips, and there
A flushed breast rose like a sun at a dawn.

XXXIII.

The copper-bound shields lay silent beside,
Their lances they lean'd to the leaning old trees,
While away in the sun an irresolute breeze
With a rippled quick step stole over the tide.

XXXIV.

Then black-wing'd birds blew over in pair,
Listless and slow, as they call'd of the seas,
And sounds came down through the tangle of trees
As lost, and nestled and hid in their hair.

XXXV.

They started disturbed, they sprang as at war
To lance and to shield ; but the dolorous sound
Was gone from the wood ; they gazed around
And saw but the birds, black-winged and afar.

XXXVI.

They gazed at each other, then turn'd them unheard,
Slow trailing their lances in long single line ;
They moved through the forest, all dark as the
sign
Of death that fell down from the ominous bird.

XXXVII.

Then the great sun died, and a rose-red bloom
Grew over his grave in a border of gold,
And a cloud with a silver-white rim was roll'd
Like a cold grey stone at the door of a tomb.

XXXVIII.

Then away on the wave the invisible night
With her eyes of stars and her storms of hair,
Sail'd on in her wonderful ships of air,
And the Isle lay dimpled in calm delight.

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XXXIX.

Strange voices were heard, sad visions were seen,
By sentries, betimes, on the opposite shore,
Where broad boughs bended their curtains of green
Far over the wave with their tropical store.

XL.

A sentry bent low on her palms and she peer'd
Suspiciously through; and, heavens! a man,
Low-brow'd and wicked, look'd backward, and
jeer'd
And taunted right full in her face as he ran:

XLI.

A low crooked man, with eyes like a bird,—
As round and cunning,—who came from the land
Of lakes, where the clouds lie low and at hand,
And the songs of the bent black swans are heard;

XLII.

Where men are most cunning and cruel withal,
And are famous as spies, and are supple and fleet,
And are webb'd like the water-fowl under the
feet,
And swim like the swans, and like pelicans call.

XLIII.

And again, on a night when the moon she was not,
A sentry saw stealing, as still as a dream,
A sudden canoe down the mid of the stream,
Like gleamings of light, and as swift as a thought.

XLIV.

And lo ! as it pass'd, from the prow there arose
A dreadful and gibbering, hairy old man,
Loud laughing, as only a maniac can,
And shaking a lance at the land of his foes ;

XLV.

Then sudden it vanish'd, as swift as it came,
Far down through the walls of the shadowy wood,
And the great moon rose like a forest aflame—
All threat'ning, sullen, and red like blood.





ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PART V.



*Well, we have threaded through and through
The gloaming forests. Fairy Isles,
Afloat in sun and summer smiles,
As fallen stars in fields of blue ;
Some futile wars with subtle love
That mortal never vanquish'd yet,
Some symphonies by angels set
In wave below, in bough above,
Were yours and mine ; but here adieu.*

*And if it come to pass some days
That you grow weary, sad, and you
Lift up deep eyes from dusty ways
Of mart and moneys, to the blue
And pure cool waters, isle and vine,
And bathe you there, and then arise
Refresh'd by one fresh thought of mine,
I rest content ; I kiss your eyes,
I kiss your hair in my delight :
I kiss my hand and say " Good night."*

*May love be thine by sun or moon,
May peace be thine by peaceful way
Through all the darling days of May,
Through all the genial days of June,
To golden days that die in smiles
Of sunset on the blessed Isles.*



ISLES OF THE AMAZONS.

PRELUDE.



WHAT way is familiar when journey'd in
first?

The new roads are rugged, the pilgrim-
age hard;

No storied names lure you, nor deeds as they erst
Allured you in songs of the grey Scian bard.

Yea, rugged the hills, and most hard of defeat

Are difficult journeys to bountiful song,
Through places not hallow'd by fame, and the feet
Of classical singers, made sacred to song.

Ay, idle indeed ! And yet to have dared
On an unsail'd sea may deserve some grace. . .
But harvests will come, and behold, my place
Shall fill with prophets, to my fullest reward :

When spires shall shine on the Amazon's shore,
From temples of God, and time shall have roll'd
Like a scroll from the border the limitless wold ;
When the tiger is tamed, and the mono no more

Swings over the waters to chatter and call
To the crocodile sleeping in rushes and fern ;
When cities shall gleam, and their battlements burn
In the sunsets of gold, where the cocoa-nuts fall ;

'Twill be something to lean from the stars and to know
That the engine, red-mouthing with turbulent
tongue,
The white ships that come, and the cargoes that go,
We invoked them of old when the nations were
young :

'Twill be something to know that we named them of
old—

That we said to the nations, Lo ! here is the fleece
That allures to the rest, and the perfectest peace,
With its foldings of sunlight shed mellow like gold :

That we were the Carsons in kingdoms untrod,
And follow'd the trail through the rustle of leaves,
And stood by the wave where solitude weaves
Her garments of mosses, and lonely as God :

That we did make venture when singers were
young,
Inviting from Grecia, from long-trodden lands
That are easy of journeys, and holy from hands
Laid upon by the Masters when giants had tongue :

But prophets should lead us,—and lifting a hand
To the world on the way, like a white guiding star,
Point out and allure to the fair and unknown,
And the far, and the hidden delights of a land.

Behold my Sierras ! there singers shall throng ;
The Andes shall break through the wings of the
night
As the fierce condor breaks through the clouds in
his flight ;
And I here plant the cross and possess them with song.





PART V.

I.



TELL you that love is the bitterest sweet
That ever laid hold on the heart of a man;
A chain to the soul, and to cheer as a ban,
And a bane to the brain, and a snare to the feet.

II.

Ay ! who shall ascend on the hollow white wings
Of love but to fall ; to fall and to learn,
Like a moth, and a man, that the lights lure to burn,
That the roses have thorns, and the honey-bee stings ?

III.

I say to you surely that grief shall befall ;
I lift you my finger, I caution you true,
And yet you go forward, laugh gaily, and you
Must learn for yourself, then mourn for us all.

IV.

You had better be drown'd than to love and to dream
It were better to sit on a moss-grown stone,
And away from the sun, and forever alone,
Slow pitching white pebbles at trout in the stream,

V.

Than to dream for a day, then awake for an age,
And to walk through the world like a ghost, and
to start,
Then suddenly stop, with the hand to the heart
Press'd hard, and the teeth set savage with rage.

VI.

Alas for a heart that is left forlorn !

If you live you must love ; if you love, regret—

It were better, perhaps, we had never been born,

Or better, at least, we could well forget.

VII.

The clouds are above us, and snowy and cold,

And what is beyond but the steel-grey sky,

And the still far stars that twinkle and lie

Like the eyes of a love or delusions of gold !

VIII.

Ah ! who would ascend ? The clouds are above.

Aye ! all things perish ; to rise is to fall.

And alack for lovers, and alas for love,

And alas that we ever were born at all.

IX.

The minstrel now stood by the border of wood,
But not as alone, and he cheer'd his heart,
And aroused his soul, and assumed his part
With passionate will, in the palms where he stood ;

X.

He reach'd his hand, like to one made strong,
In a strange resolve to a questionable good,
And he shook his hair, made free from his mood
Forgot his silence and resumed his song :

“ She is sweet as the breath of the Castile rose,
She is warm to the heart as a world of wine,
And as rich to behold as the rose that grows
With its red heart bent to the tide of the Rhine.

“ O hot blood born of the heavens above !
I shall drain her soul, I shall drink her up ;
I shall love with a searching and merciless love,
I shall sip her lips as the brown bees sup

“ From the great gold heart of the buttercup !
I shall live and love ! I shall have my day.
Let the suns fall down or the moons rise up,
And die in my time, and who shall gainsay ?

“ What boots me the battles that I have fought
With self for honour ? My brave resolves ;
And who takes note ? The soul dissolves
In a sea of love, and the land is forgot.

“ And the march of men, and the drift of ships,
And the dreams of fame, and desires for gold,
They shall go for aye, as a tale that is told,
Nor divide for a day my lips from her lips.

“ And a knight shall rest, and none shall say nay,
In a green Isle wash'd by an arm of the seas,
And wall'd from the world by the white Andes,
For the years are of age and can go their way.”

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XI.

The sentinel stood on the farthestmost land,
And shouted aloud to the shadowy forms :
“ He comes, he comes, in the strength of storms,”
And struck her shield, and, her sword in hand,

XII.

She cried, “ He comes with his silver spears,
With flint-tipp’d arrows and bended bows,
To take our blood, though we give him tears,
And to flood our Isle in a world of woes.”

XIII.

“ He comes, O Queen of the sun-kiss’d Isle,
He comes as a wind comes, blown from the seas,
In a cloud of canoes, on the curling breeze,
With his shields of tortoise and of crocodile.”

XIV.

She dared them come like a storm of seas,
To come as the winds come, fierce and frantic ;
As sounding down to the far Atlantic,
And sounding away to the deep Andes.

XV.

She rush'd her down where the white tide ran,
She breasted away where the breakers reel'd,
She shook her sword in the foeman's van,
And beat, as the waves beat, sword on shield.

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XVI.

Sweeter than swans are a maiden's graces !
Sweeter than fruits are the kisses of morn !
Sweeter than babes is a love new-born,
But sweeter than all are a love's embraces.

XVII.

She slept at peace, and the sentries' warning
Scarce could waken the splendid Queen ;
She slept in peace in the opaline
Hush and blush of the tropic morning ;

XVIII.

And bound about by the twining glory,
Vine and trellis in the vernal morn,
As still and sweet as a babe new-born,
The brown Queen dream'd of the old new story.

XIX.

But hark ! her sentry's passionate words,
The sound of shields, and the clash of swords !
And slow she comes, her head on her breast,
And her two hands held as to plead for rest.

XX.

Where, O where, are the Juno graces ?

Where, O where, is the glance of Jove,
When the Queen comes forth from the sacred places,
Hidden away in the heart of the grove ?

XXI.

Too deep, too deep, of the waters of love,
The beautiful woman had drunk in the wood :
The dangerous, wonderful waters that fill
The soul with wine that subdues the will.
She doubled her hands and she helpless stood,
With her head held down and her hands above.

XXII.

They rallied around as of old—they besought her,
With swords to the sun and the sounding shield,
To lead them again to the glorious field,
So sacred to Freedom ; and, breathless, they brought
her

Her buckler and sword, and her armour all bright

With a thousand gems enjewell'd in gold.

She lifted her head with the look of old,

An instant only ; with all of her might

She sought to be strong and majestic again :

She bared them her arms and her ample brown
breast ;

They lifted her armour, they strove to invest

Her form in armour, but they strove in vain ;

It closed no more, but clanged on the ground,

Like the fall of a knight, with an ominous sound,

And she shook her hair and she cried, " Alas !

That love should come and that life should pass ; "

She cried, " Alas ! to be cursed . . . and bless'd,

For the noons of love and the nights of rest."

XXIII.

Her warriors wonder'd ; but they stood apart,

And trail'd their swords, and subdued their eyes

To earth in sorrow and in hush'd surprise,

And forgot themselves in their pity of heart.

XXIV.

“ O Isles of the Sun,” cried the blue-eyed youth,
“ O Edens new-made and let down from above !
Be sacred to peace and to passionate love,
Made happy in peace and made holy with truth.

XXV.

“ O gardens of God, new-planted below !
Shall rivers be red ? Shall day be night ? ”
He stood in the wood with his face to the foe,
Apart with his buckler and sword for the fight.

XXVI.

But the fair Isle fill'd with the fierce invader ;
They form'd on the strand, they lifted their spears,
Where never was man for years and for years,
And moved on the Queen. She lifted and laid her
Finger-tip to her lips. And O sweet
Was the song of love, and the song new-born,
That the minstrel blew in the virgin morn,
Away where the trees and the soft sands meet.

XXVII.

The strong men lean'd and their shields let fall,
And slowly they moved with their trailing spears,
And heads bow'd down as if bent with years,
And an air of gentleness over them all.

XXVIII.

The men grew glad as the song ascended,
They lean'd their lances against the palms,
They reach'd their arms as to reach for alms,
And the Amazons came—and their reign was ended.

XXIX.

They reach'd their arms to the arms extended,
Put by their swords, and no more seem'd sad,
But moved as the men moved, tall and splendid—
Mingled together, and were all made glad.

XXX.

Then the Queen stood tall, as of old she had stood,
With her face to the sun and her breast to the foe ;
Then moved like a king, unheeding and slow,
And aside to the singer in the fringe of the wood.

XXXI.

She led him forth, and she bade him sing :
Then bade him cease ; and the gold of his hair
She touch'd with her hands ; she embraced him
there,
Then lifted her voice and proclaim'd him King.

XXXII.

And the men made fair in their new-found loves,
They all cried " King ! " and again and again,
Cried, " Long may they live, and long may they
reign,
As true in their loves as the red-bill'd doves :

XXXIII.

“ Ay, long may they live, and long may they love,
And their blue-eyed babes with the years increase,
And we all have love, and we all have peace,
While the seas are below or the sun is above.

XXXIV.

“ Let the winds blow fair and the fruits be gold,
And the gods be gracious to King and Queen,
While the tides are grey or the Isles are green,
Or the moons wax new, or the moons wane old !”

XXXV.

The tawny old crone here lays her stone
On the leaning grass and reaches a hand ;
The day like a beautiful dream has flown,
The curtains of night come down on the land,
And I dip to the oars ; but ere I go,
I tip her an extra bright pesos or so,
And I smile my thanks, for I think them due ;
But, fairest of readers, now what think you ?



IN THE INDIAN SUMMER.



*Sing songs and give love in oblations,
Be glad and forget in a rhyme
Mutations of time and mutations
Of thought that is fiercer than time.*



IN THE INDIAN SUMMER.



THE sunlight lay in gather'd sheaves
Along the ground, the golden leaves
Possess'd the land and lay in bars

Above the lifted lawn of green
Beneath the feet, or fell as stars
Fall, slantwise, shimmering and still
Upon the plain, upon the hill,
And heaving hill and plain between.

Some steeds in panoply were seen
Strong, martial train'd, with manes in air,
And tassell'd reins and mountings rare ;
Some silent people here and there

That gather'd leaves with listless will,
Or moved adown the dappled green,
Or look'd away with idle gaze
Against the gold and purple haze ;
You might have heard red apples fall,
The pheasant on the farther hill,
A single, lonely, locust trill,
Or sliding, sable crickets call
From out the grass, but that was all.

A wanderer of many lands
Was I, a weary Ishmaelite
That knew the sign of lifted hands ;
Had seen the Crescent-mosques, had seen
The peopled oaks of Aberdeen ;
Then cross'd the hilly seas, and saw
The sable pines of Mackinaw
And lakes that lifted cold and white.

I saw the sweet Miami, saw
The swift Ohio bent and roll'd
Between his gleaming walls of gold ;
The Wabash banks of grey papaw,

The Mississippi's ash at morn
Of autumn, when the oak is red ;
Saw slanting pyramids of corn,
The level fields of spotted swine,
The crooked lanes of lowing kine,
And in the burning bushes saw
The face of God, with bended head.

But when I saw her face I said,
Earth has no fruits so fairly red,
As these that swing above my head ;
No purpled leaf, no poppied land,
Like this that lies in reach of hand.

Some maple leaves hung overhead,
In scarlet hues and many kind ;
Some danced about upon the sand,
As dancers dancing hand in hand,
Begirt in gold, array'd in red,
To soft songs whistled in the wind.

Her image seem'd a spirit's then,
She fill'd the lawn whereon she stood,
And low unto myself I said :
O soul, inured to rue and rime,
To barren toil and bitter bread,
To biting rime, to bitter rue,
Earth is not Nazareth ; be good.
O sacred Indian summer time,
Of scarlet fruits, of fragrant wood,
Of purpled clouds, of curling haze—
O days of golden dreams and days
Of banish'd, vanish'd tawny men,
Of martial songs and manly deeds,
Be fair to-day and bear me true.
We mounted, turn'd the sudden steeds
Toward the yellow hills and flew.

My faith ! but she rode fair, and she
Had scarlet berries in her hair,
And on her hands white starry stones.
The satellites of many thrones
Fall down before her gracious air

In that full season : Fair to see
Are pearly shells, red virgin gold
And yellow fruits and sun-down seas,
And babes sun-brown ; but all of these,
And all fair things of sea besides,
Before the matchless, manifold
Accomplishments of her who rides
With autumn summer in her hair,
And knows her steed and holds her fair
And stately in her stormy seat,
They lie like playthings at her feet.

By heaven ! she was more than fair,
And more than good, and matchless wise,
With all the sunlight in her eyes,
And all the midnight in her hair.

The blowing hair ! the banner'd manes !
The rustling leaves in whispers blown !
The sounding feet made melody,
And earth was fill'd and I was glad
With sweet delight ; ay, even sad

From pure excess of joy that fills
The soul sometimes too eager grown . . .
Through leafy avenues and lanes,
And lo ! we climb'd the yellow hills.

With russet leaves about the brows
That reach'd from over-reaching trees,
With purpled briers to the knees
Of steeds that fretted foamy thews,
We turn'd to look a time below
Beneath the ancient arch of boughs,
That bent above us as a bow
Of promise, bound in many hues.

I reach'd my hand. I could refuse
All fruits but this, the touch of her
At such a time. But lo ! she lean'd,
With lifted face and soul, and leant
As leans devoutest worshipper,
Beyond the branches scarlet screen'd
And look'd above me and beyond,
So fix'd and silent, still and fond,

She seem'd the while she look'd to lose
Her very soul in such intent.
She look'd on other things, but I,
I saw nor scarlet leaf nor sky ;
I look'd on her, and only her.

Afar the city lay in smokes
Of battle, and the martial strokes
Of Progress thunder'd through the land
And struck against the yellow trees
And roll'd in hollow echoes on,
Like sounding limits of the seas
That smite the shelly shores at dawn.

Beyond, below, on either hand
There reach'd a lake in belt of pine,
A very dream, a distant dawn
Asleep in all the autumn shine,
Some like one of another land
That I once laid a hand upon
And loved too well, and named as mine.

She sometimes touch'd with dimpled hand
The drifting mane with dreamy air,
She sometimes push'd aback her hair,
But still she lean'd and look'd afar,
As silent as the statues stand ;
For what ? For falling leaf ? For star,
That runs before the bride of death ? . . .
The elements were still ; a breath
Stirr'd not, the level sun
Pour'd in his arrows every one ;
Spill'd all his wealth of purpled red,
On velvet poplar leaf below,
On arching chestnut overhead,
In all the hues of heaven's bow.

She sat the upper hill, and high,
I spurr'd my black steed to her side,
"The bow of promise, lo !" I cried,
And lifted up my eyes to hers,
With all the fervid love that stirs
The blood of men beneath the sun,
And reach'd my hand, as one undone,

In suppliance, to hers above.
“ The bow of promise ! give me love !
I reach a hand, I rise or fall,
Henceforth from this, put forth a hand
From your high place and let me stand,
Stand soul and body, white and tall !
Why I would live for you, would die
To-morrow, but to live to-day.
Give me but love and let me live
To die before you ; I can pray
To only you, because I know
If you but give what I bestow
That God has nothing left to give.”

Christ ! still her stately head was raised,
And still she silent sat, and gazed
Beyond the trees, beyond the town,
To where the dimpled waters slept,
Nor splendid eyes once bended down
To eyes that lifted up and wept.

She spake not, nor subdued her head
To note a hand or heed a word ;
And then I question'd if she heard
My life-tale on that leafy hill,
Or any fervid word I said,
And spoke with bold, vehement will.

She moved, and from her bridle hand
She sudden drew the dainty glove,
Then gazed again upon the land.
The dimpled hand, a snowy dove,
A-lit and moved along the mane
Of glossy skeins ; then, overbold,
It fell across the mane, and lay
Before my eyes a sweet bouquet
Of cluster'd kisses, white as snow.
I should have seized it reaching so,
But something bade me back ; a ban—
Around the third fair finger ran
A shining, hateful hoop of gold.

Ay, then I turn'd, I look'd away,
I sudden felt forlorn and chill;
I whistled, like, for want to say,
And then I said, with bended head,
"Another's ship from other shores,
With richer freight, with fairer stores
Shall come to her some day instead,"
Then turn'd about and all was still.

Yea, you had chafed at this and cried,
And laugh'd with bloodless lips and said
Some bitter thing to sate your pride,
And toss'd aloft a lordly head
And acted well some wilful lie,
And, most like, cursed yourself, but I . . .
Well, you be crucified and you
Be broken up with lances through
The soul, then you may turn to find
Some ladder rounds in keenest rods,
Some solace in the bitter rind,

Some favour with the gods irate,
The everlasting anger'd gods,
And ask not overmuch of fate.

I was not born, was never bless'd
With cunning ways, or wit or skill
In woman's ways, or words of love,
Or fashion'd suppliance of will.
A very clown, I think, had guess'd
How out of place and plain I seem'd ;
I, I, the idol worshipper,
Who saw no maple leaves or sky,
But took some touch and hue of her.
Then, after all, what right had I
To lift my eyes to eyes that beam'd
So far beyond, so fair above ?

I am a pagan, heathen, lo !
A savage man, of savage lands,
Too quick to love, too slow to know
The sign that tame love understands,
Or cold approaches pride demands.

Lo ! leafy Cleveland on her lake,
In autumn time is sweet to touch,
For tamer men of gentler mien,
But as for me — another scene.
A land below the Alps I know,
Set well with grapes and girt with much
Of woodland beauty ; I shall take
My rides by night below the light
Of Manua Loa, ride below
The steep and starry Hualu height ;
Shall lift my hands in many lands,
See South Sea palm, see Northland fir,
See white-wing'd swans, see red-bill'd doves ;
See many lands and many loves,
But never more the face of her.

And what her name or where the place
Of her who makes my Mecca's prayer,
Concerns you not ; not any trace
Of entrance to my temple's shrine
Remains. The memory is mine,
And none shall pass the portals there.

The present ! take it, hold it thine,
But that one hour out from all
The years that are, or yet shall fall,
I pluck it out, I name it mine,
And whistle by the rest, and laugh
To see it blown about as chaff ;
That hour bound in sunny sheaves,
With tassell'd shocks of golden shine,
That hour, wound in scarlet leaves,
Is mine. I stretch a hand and swear
An oath that breaks into a prayer ;
By heaven, it is wholly mine !

I see the gold and purple gleam
Of autumn leaves, a reach of seas,
A silent rider like a dream
Moves by, a mist of mysteries,
And these are mine, and only these,
Yet they be more in my esteem,
Than silver'd sails on coral'd seas.

Let red-leaf'd boughs sweet fruits bestow,
Let fame of foreign lands be mine,
Let blame of faithless men befall ;
It matters nothing ; over all,
One hour arches like a bow
Of promise blent in many hues,
That tide nor time shall bid decline ;
Or storms of all the years refuse.



Some heedless hoofs went sounding down
The broken way. The woods were brown,
And homely now ; some idle talk
Of folk and town ; a broken walk ;
But sounding feet made song no more
For me along that leafy shore.

The sun caught up his gather'd sheaves,
A squirrel caught a nut and ran,
A rabbit rustled in the leaves ;
A whirling bat, black-wing'd and tan
Blew swift between us ; sullen night

Fell down upon us ; mottled kine,
With lifted heads, went lowing down
The rocky ridge toward the town,
And all the woods grew dark as wine.





OLIVE LEAVES.



*O boy at peace upon the Delaware !
O brother mine, that fell in battle front
Of life, so braver, nobler far than I,
The wanderer who vexed all gentleness,
Receive this song; I have but this to give.
I may not rear the rich man's ghostly stone ;
But you, through all my follies loving still
And trusting me . . . nay, I shall not forget.*

*A failing hand in mine, and fading eyes
That look'd in mine as from another land,
You said : " Some gentler things; a song for Peace.
'Mid all your songs for men one song for God."
And then the dark-brow'd mother, Death, bent down
Her face to yours, and you were born to Him.*



OLIVE LEAVES.

AT BETHLEHEM.

“ In the desert a fountain is springing,
In the wild waste there still is a tree.”

“ Though the many lights dwindle to one light,
There is help if the heavens have one.”

“ Change lays not her hand upon truth.”



WITH incense and myrrh and sweet spices,

Frankincense and sacredest oil

In ivory, chased with devices

Cut quaint and in serpentine coil ;

Heads bared, and held down to the bosom ;

Brows massive with wisdom and bronzed ;

Beards white as the white may in blossom,

And borne to the breast and beyond,—

Came the Wise of the East, bending lowly
On staffs, with their garments girt round
With girdles of hair, to the Holy
Child Christ, in their sandals. The sound
Of song and thanksgiving ascended—
Deep night! Yet some shepherds afar
Heard a wail with the worshipping blended,
And they then knew the sign of the star.





IN PALESTINE.



JEBUS! thou mother of prophets,
Of soldiers and heroes of song ;
Let the crescent oppress thee and scoff its
Blind will, let the days do thee wrong ;

But to me thou art sacred and splendid,
And to me thou art matchless and fair,
As the tawny sweet twilight, with blended
Sunlight and red stars in her hair.

Thy fair ships once came from sweet Cyprus,
And fair ships drew in from Cyrene,
With fruits and rich robes and sweet spices
For thee and thine eminent queen ;

And camels came in with the traces
Of white desert dust in their hair
As they kneel'd in the loud market-places,
And Arabs with lances were there.

'Tis past, and the Bedouin pillows
His head where thy battlements fall,
And thy temples flash gold to the billows,
Never more over turreted wall.

'Tis past, and the green velvet mosses
Have grown by the sea, and now sore
Does the far billow mourn for his losses
Of lifted white ships to the shore.

Let the crescent uprise, let it flash on
Thy dust in the garden of death,
Thy chasten'd and passionless passion,
Sunk down to the sound of a breath ;

You lived like a king on a throne and
You died like a queen of the south ;
For you lifted the cup with your own hand
To your proud and your passionate mouth ;

Like a splendid swift serpent surrounded
With fire and sword, in your side
You struck your hot fangs and confounded
Your foes ; and struck deep, and so—died.





BEYOND JORDAN.



AND they came to him, mothers of Judah,
Dark-eyed and in splendour of hair,
Bearing down over shoulders of beauty,
And bosoms half hidden, half bare ;

And they brought him their babes and besought him
Half kneeling, with suppliant air,
To bless the brown cherubs they brought him,
With holy hands laid in their hair.

Then reaching his hands he said, lowly,
“ Of such is My Kingdom ; ” and then
Took the brown little babes in the holy
White hands of the Saviour of men ;

Held them close to his heart and caress'd them,
Put his face down to theirs as in prayer,
Put their hands to his neck, and so bless'd them,
With baby hands hid in his hair.





FAITH.



HERE were whimsical turns of the waters,
There were rhythmical talks of the
sea—

There were gather'd the darkest-eyed daughters
Of men, by the dark Galilee.

A blowing full sail, and a parting
From multitudes, living in him,
A trembling of lips, and tears starting
From eyes that look'd downward and dim.

A mantle of night and a marching
Of storms, and a sounding of seas,
Of furrows of foam and of arching
Black billows ; a bending of knees ;
The rising of Christ—an entreating—
Hands reach'd to the seas as he saith,
“ Have Faith ! ” And lo ! still are repeating
All seas, “ Have Faith ! Have Faith ! Have Faith ! ”





HOPE.



WHAT song is well sung not of sorrow?
What triumph well won without pain?
What virtue shall be, and not borrow
Bright lustre from many a stain?

What birth has there been without travail?
What battle well won without blood?
What good shall earth see without evil
Ingarner'd as chaff with the good?

Lo! the Cross set in rocks by the Roman,
And nourish'd by blood of the Lamb,
And water'd by tears of the woman,
Has flourish'd, has spread like a palm;

Has put forth in the frosts, and far regions
Of snows in the North, and South sands,
Where never the tramp of his legions
Was heard, or has reach'd forth his red hands.

Be thankful: the price and the payment,
The birth, the privations and scorn,
The cross, and the parting of raiment,
Are finish'd. The star brought us morn:

Look starward; stand far and unearthy,
Free-soul'd as a banner unfurl'd.
Be worthy, O brother, be worthy!
For a God was the price of the world.





CHARITY.

HER hands were clasped downward and
doubled,
Her head was held down and depress'd,
Her bosom, like white billows troubled,
Fell fitful and rose in unrest ;

Her robes were all dust, and disorder'd
Her glory of hair, and her brow,
Her face, that had lifted and lorded,
Fell pallid and passionless now.

She heard not accusers that brought her
In mockery hurried to Him,
Nor heeded, nor said, nor besought her
With eyes lifted doubtful and dim.

All crush'd and stone-cast in behaviour,
She stood as a marble would stand,
Then the Saviour bent down, and the Saviour
In silence wrote on in the sand.

What wrote He ? How fondly one lingers
And questions, what holy command
Fell down from the beautiful fingers
Of Jesus, like gems in the sand.

O better the Scian uncherish'd
Had died ere a note or device
Of battle was fashion'd, than perish'd
This only line written by Christ.

Ay, better that every one pliant
And cunning with harp or with tongue ;
Yea, better were Milton the giant
Who sang as the tempests have sung,

To celebrate battles in glory,
Where never were battles forgot,
Than that this little line, with its story
Of peace and compassion were not.

He arose and he look'd on the daughter
Of Eve, like a delicate flower,
And he heard the revilers that brought her—
Men stormy, and strong as a tower ;

And he said, " She has sinn'd ; let the blameless
Come forward and cast the first stone !"
But they, they fled shamed and yet shameless ;
And she, she stood white and alone.

Who now shall accuse and arraign us ?
What man shall condemn and disown ?
Since Christ has said only the stainless
Shall cast at his fellows a stone.

For what man can bare us his bosom,
And touch with his forefinger there,
And say, 'Tis as snow, as a blossom ?
Beware of the stainless, beware !

O woman, born first to believe us ;
Yea, also born first to forget ;
Born first to betray and deceive us,
Yet first to repent and regret !

O first then in all that is human,
Lo ! first where the Nazarene trod,
O woman ! O beautiful woman !
Be then first in the kingdom of God.



THE LAST SUPPER.

“ And when they had sung a hymn they went out
into the Mount of Olives.”



HAT song sang the twelve with the
Saviour

When finish'd the Sacrament wine?

Were they bow'd and subdued in behaviour,
Or bold as made bold with a sign?

Were the hairy breasts strong and defiant?

Were the naked arms brawny and strong?

Were the bearded lips lifted reliant,

Thrust forth and full sturdy with song!

What sang they? What sweet song of Zion

With Christ in their midst like a crown?

While here sat Saint Peter, the lion;

And there like a lamb, with head down,

Sat Saint John, with his silken and raven

Rich hair on his shoulders, and eyes

Lifting up the faces unshaven

Like a sensitive child's in surprise.

Was the song as strong fishermen swinging

Their nets full of hope to the sea?

Or low, like the ripple-wave, singing

Sea-songs on their loved Galilee?

Were they sad with foreshadow of sorrows,

Like the birds that sing low when the breeze

Is tip-toe with a tale of to-morrows,—

Of earthquakes and sinking of seas?

Ah ! soft was their song as the waves are
That fall in low musical moans ;
And sad I should say as the winds are
That blow by the white grave stones.





A SONG FOR PEACE.

I.



S a tale that is told, as a vision,
 Forgive and forget ; for I say
That the true shall endure the derision
Of the false till the full of the day ;

II.

Ay, forgive as you would be forgiven ;
 Ay, forget, lest the ill you have done
Be remember'd against you in heaven
 And all the days under the sun.

III.

For who shall have bread without labour ?
And who shall have rest without price ?
And who shall hold war with his neighbour
With promise of peace with the Christ ?

IV.

The years may lay hand on fair heaven ;
May place and displace the red stars ;
May stain them, as blood-stains are driven
At sunset in beautiful bars ;

V.

May shroud them in black till they fret us
As clouds with their showers of tears ;
May grind us to dust and forget us,
May the years, O, the pitiless years !

VI.

The precepts of Christ are beyond them ;
The truths by the Nazarene taught,
With the tramp of the ages upon them,
They endure as though ages were nought ;

VII.

The deserts may drink up the fountains,
The forests give place to the plain,
The main may give place to the mountains,
The mountains return to the main ;

VIII.

Mutations of worlds and mutations
Of suns may take place, but the reign
Of Time, and the toils and vexations
Bequeath them, no, never a stain.

IX.

Go forth to the fields as one sowing,
Sing songs and be glad as you go,
There are seeds that take root without showing,
And bear some fruit whether or no.

X.

And the sun shall shine sooner or later,
Though the midnight breaks ground on the morn,
Then appeal you to Christ the Creator,
And to grey-bearded Time his first-born.





FALLEN LEAVES.



*Some fugitive lines that allure us no more,
Some fragments that fell to the sea out of time ;
Unfinish'd and guiltless of thought as of rhyme,
Thrown now on the world like waifs on the shore.*



FALLEN LEAVES.

PALM LEAVES.



HATCH of palm and a patch of clover,
Breath of balm in a field of brown,
The clouds blew up and the birds flew over,
And I look'd upward : but who look'd down ?

Who was true in the test that tried us ?

Who was it mock'd ? Who now may mourn
The loss of a love that a cross denied us,
With folded hands and a heart forlorn ?

God forgive when the fair forget us.

The worth of a smile, the weight of a tear,
Why, who can measure? The fates beset us.

We laugh a moment; we mourn a year.





THOMAS OF TIGRE.



ING of Tigre, comrade true !

Where in all thine isles art thou ?

Sailing on Fonseca blue ?

Nearing Amapala now ?

King of Tigre, where art thou ?

Battling for Antilles' queen ?

Sabre hilt, or olive bough ?

Crown of dust, or laurel green ?

Roving love, or marriage vow ?

King and comrade, where art thou ?

Sailing on Pacific seas ?
Pitching tent in Pimo now ?
Underneath magnolia trees ?
Thatch of palm, or cedar bough ?
Soldier-singer, where art thou ?

Coasting on the Oregon ?
Saddle, bow, or birchen prow ?
Round the Isles of Amazon ?
Pampas, plain, or mountain brow ?
Prince of rovers, where art thou ?

Answer me from out the West.
I am weary, stricken now ;
Thou art strong and I would rest :
Reach a hand with lifted brow—
King of Tigre, where art thou ?





IN YOSEMITE VALLEY.



OUND! sound! sound!

Oh, colossal walls, as crown'd

In one eternal thunder!

Sound! sound! sound!

Oh, ye oceans overhead,

While we walk, subdued in wonder,

In the ferns and grasses, under

And beside the swift Merced!

Fret! fret! fret!

Streaming, sounding banners, set

On the giant granite castles

In the clouds and in the snow!

But the foe he comes not yet—
We are loyal, valiant vassals,
And we touch the trailing tassels,
Of the banners far below.

Surge! surge! surge!
From the white Sierra's verge,
To the very valley blossom.

Surge! surge! surge!
Yet the song-bird builds a home,
And the mossy branches cross them,
And the tasseled tree-tops toss them,
In the clouds of falling foam.

Sweep! sweep! sweep!
Oh, ye heaven-born and deep,
In one dread, unbroken chorus!
We may wonder or may weep—
We may wait on God before us;
We may shout or lift a hand—
We may bow down and deplore us,
But may never understand.

Beat! beat! beat!
We advance, but would retreat
From this restless, broken breast
Of the earth in a convulsion.
We would rest, but dare not rest,
For the angel of expulsion
From this Paradise below
Is upon us, and . . . we go.





DEAD IN THE SIERRAS.

HIS footprints have failed us,
Where berries are red,
And madroños are rankest.

The hunter is dead !

The grizzly may pass
By his half-open door ;
May pass and repass
On his path, as of yore ;

The panther may crouch
In the leaves on his limb ;
May scream and may scream—
It is nothing to him.

Prone, bearded, and breasted
Like columns of stone ;
And tall as a pine—
As a pine overthrown !

His camp-fires gone,
What else can be done
Than let him sleep on
Till the light of the sun ?

Ay, tombless ! what of it ?
Marble is dust,
Cold and repellent ;
And iron is rust.



IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA.



HERE the cocoa and cactus are neighbours,
Where the fig and the fir-tree are one ;
Where the brave corn is lifting bent sabres
And flashing them far in the sun ;

Where the maidens blush red in their tresses
Of night, and retreat to advance,
And the dark, sweeping eyelash expresses
Deep passion, half hush'd in a trance ;

Where the fig is in leaf, where the blossom
Of orange is fragrant as fair—
Santa Barbara's balm in the bosom,
Her sunny, soft winds in the hair ;

Where the grape is most luscious, where laden
Long branches bend double with gold ;
Los Angeles leans like a maiden,
Red, blushing, half shy, and half bold.

Where passion was born, and where poets
Are deeper in silence than song,
A love knows a love, and may know its
Reward, yet may never know wrong.

Where passion was born and where blushes
Gave birth to my songs of the South,
And a song is a love-tale, and rushes,
Unchid, through the red of the mouth ;

Where an Adam in Eden reposes,
I repose, I am glad, and take wine
In the clambering, redolent roses,
And under my fig and my vine.





WHO SHALL SAY ?



SINKING sun, a sky of red,
In bars and banners overhead,
And blown apart like curtains drawn ;

Afar a-sea a blowing sail
That shall go down before the dawn ;
And they are passion-toss'd and pale,
The two that stand and look alone
And silent, as two shafts of stone
Set head and foot above the dead.

They watch the ship, the weary sun,
The banner'd streamers every one,

Till darkness hides them in her hair.
The winds come in as cold as death,
And not a palm above the pair
To lift a lance or break a breath.

The hollow of the ocean fills
Like sounding hollow halls of stone,
And not a banner streams above ;
The sea is set in snowy hills.
The ship is lost. The winds are blown
Unheeded now ; yet who shall say :
“ We had been wiser so than they
Who wept and watch'd the parting sail
In silence ; mute with sorrow, pale
With weeping for departed love ? ”





LEONESE LOVE SONG.



If earth is an oyster love is the pearl,
Made pure from pure caresses ;
Then loosen the gold of your hair, my girl,
And hide my pearl in your tresses.

So, coral to coral and pearl to pearl,
And a cloud of curls above me,
O bury me deep, my beautiful girl,
And then confess you love me.

Then kill me dead and cover me deep,
Where never a soul discovers,
So deep in your heart to sleep, to sleep
In the darlingest tomb of lovers.

The world goes over my beautiful girl
In glitter and gold and odour of roses,
In eddies of splendour, in oceans of pearl,
But here the heaven reposes

The world it is wide ; men go their ways,
But love it is wise, and of all the hours,
And of all the beautiful sun-born days,
It sips their sweets as the bees sip flowers.





DOWN INTO THE DUST.



Is it worth while that we jostle a brother
Bearing his load on the rough road of
life?

Is it worth while that we jeer at each other
In blackness of heart?—that we war to the knife?
God pity us all in our pitiful strife.

God pity us all as we jostle each other;
God pardon us all for the triumphs we feel
When a fellow goes down 'neath his load on the heather,
Pierced to the heart: words are keener than steel,
And mightier far for woe or for weal.

Were it not well, in this brief little journey
On over the isthmus, down into the tide,
We give him a fish instead of a serpent,
Ere folding the hands to be and abide
Forever and aye in dust at his side?

Look at the roses saluting each other ;
Look at the herds all at peace on the plain—
Man, and man only, makes war on his brother,
And laughs in his heart at his peril and pain ;
Shamed by the beasts that go down on the plain.

Is it worth while that we battle to humble
Some poor fellow soldier down into the dust?
God pity us all ! Time eftsoon will tumble
All of us together like leaves in a gust,
Humbled indeed down into the dust.





IN SAN FRANCISCO.



O! here sit we 'mid the sun-down seas
And the white sierras. The swift, sweet
breeze

Is about us here ; and a sky so fair

Is bending above in azaline hue,

That you gaze and you gaze in delight, and you

See God and the portals of heaven there.

Yea, here sit we where the white ships ride

In the morn, made glad and forgetful of night,

The white and the brown men side by side

In search of the truth, and betrothed to the right ;

For these are the idols, and only these,

Of men that abide by the sun-down seas.

The brown brave hand of the harvester,
The delicate hand of the prince untried,
The rough hard hand of the carpenter,
They are all upheld with an equal pride ;
And the prize it is his to be crown'd or blest,
Prince or pæon, who bears him best.

Yea, here sit we by the golden gate,
Nor demanding much, but inviting you all,
Nor publishing loud, but daring to wait,
And great in much that the days deem small ;
And the gate it is God's, to Cathay, Japan,—
And who shall shut it in the face of man ?





SHADOWS OF SHASTA.



IN the place where the grizzly reposes,
Under peaks where a right is a wrong,
I have memories richer than roses,
Sweet echoes more sweet than a song ;

Sounds sweet as the voice of a singer
Made sacred with sorrows unsaid,
And a love that implores me to linger
For the love of dead days and their dead.

But I turn, throwing kisses, returning
To strife and to turbulent men,
As to learn to be wise, as unlearning
All things that were manliest then.





AT SEA.



W e part as ships on a pathless main,
Gaily enough, for the sense of pain
Is asleep at first : but ghosts will arise
When we would repose, and the forms will come
And walk when we walk, and will not be dumb,
Nor yet forget with their wakeful eyes.

When we most need rest, and the perfect sleep,
Some hand will reach from the dark, and keep

The curtains drawn and the pillows toss'd
Like a tide of foam ; and one will say
At night,—O Heaven, that it were day !
And one by night through the misty tears
Will say,—O Heaven, the days are years,
And I would to Heaven that the waves were cross'd.





LO, HERE!



THINK 'twere better books were not ;

I think, if we had spurn'd them all

At once, as mounting o'er a wall

That girt about us, and besought

The Master in His holy place

Of cloudy forests, far from men,

Of books, and creeds, and mystic things,

And so implored Him face to face

For truth, the truth the prophet sings,

It had been better for us all,

And some at least been happy then.



SUMMER FROSTS.



FROSTS of an hour! Fruits of a season!
Who foresees them? Slain in a day,
The loves of a lustrum. Who shall say
The heart has sense or the soul has reason?

. . . . One not-knowing and one not caring.
. . . Leaves in their pathway. Let them part;
She with the gifts of a gracious bearing,
He with the pangs of a passionate heart.



SLEEP THAT WAS NOT SLEEP.

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BACK there, madam! Mark you, there!

I lie crouch'd against the wall,

And I dare not lift a finger,

Dare not lift my eyes or call,

While you hesitate and linger,

Leering through your tangled hair ;

Drop the curtains! Back, I say!

Lift aside your tangled hair

Overhanging coffin'd clay,

Resurrected for a day,

Cold and wet as cast-away.

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. . . It was hard, but what was better
For a man so strangely born
Underneath the stars or sun,
Than the savage race I run
Through the midnight to the morn,
Spite of fate or prison fetter?

Through the darkness to the dawn,
What beneath the sun was better?
Then I turn'd, and . . . you were gone.
. . . Glory had a price; I paid her!
Truth was doubtful; I betray'd her!
You obey'd her to the letter.
And what profits? Nothing, save
That I have slain the days full well—
That you . . . are dead and in your grave;
That I . . . am living and in hell.

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Ay! before-time you beset me,
Laugh'd and vow'd to not forget me,

Leer'd and mock'd with all your might
When the fever held its riot
And the doctors bade be quiet.
Christ! you came to my bedside
In the middle of the night,
With your two hands on your heart—
And you press'd on my bedside,
And so press'd upon your heart
That the blood, all thick and blacken'd
When your long brown fingers slacken'd,
Oozed between them to the floor,
Staining me for evermore.

And your mantle it was moulded,
And streak'd yellow where it folded,
Then your heavy, slimy hair,
On your bosom blue and bare,
Which you did not try to hide!
That you know was nothing fair,
As you press'd on my bedside!

Then your eyes had such a glare,
And the smell of death was there,
And the spirits that were with you
Whistled through the mossy door,
And they danced upon my bosom,
And they tangled up my hair,
And made crosses on the floor.

* * *

It was not my fault, remember,
All this life of black disasters,
All this life of dark December,
All this heart-sickness and sadness.
Though we both did have our masters,
Yours was Love and mine Ambition,
Mine is driving me to madness,
Yours, it drove you to perdition.

* * *

Yes, some time, if you will have it,
When this hot brain is less rabid,
When our masters both are sleeping,
When the storm the stars is keeping,

Leave that yellow moulded mantle,
That dull, sullen, frozen stare,
And the cold death in your hair,
And I will no more upbraid you ;
Leave the darkness where they laid you,
Leave the dampness you inhabit.

I will meet you just one minute
By the oak tree, you remember,
With the grape-vine tangled in it ;
I will tell you one sweet story,
With sweet balm and healing in it ;
You will sigh *Memento mori*—
But remember, now remember,
I remain there but one minute.

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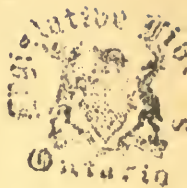
“SIERRAS ADIOS.”



WITH the buckler and sword into battle
I moved, I was matchless and strong ;
I stood in the rush and the rattle
Of shot, and the spirit of song
Was upon me ; and youthful and splendid
My armour flashed far in the sun
As I sang of my land—it is ended,
And all has been done, and undone.

I descend with my dead in the trenches,
To-night I bend down on the plain
In the dark, and a memory wrenches
The soul ; I turn up to the rain

The cold and the beautiful faces,
 Ay, faces forbidden for years,
Turn'd up to my face with the traces
 Of blood to the white rain of tears.



Count backward the years on your fingers,
 While forward rides yonder white moon,
Till the soul turns aside, and it lingers
 By a grave that was born of a June ;
By the grave of a soul, where the grasses
 Are tangled as witch-woven hair ;
And where footprints are not, and where passes
 Not any thing known any where ;

By a grave without tombstone or token,
 At a tomb where not fern leaf or fir,
Root or branch, was once bended or broken,
 To bestow there the body of her ;
For it lives, and the soul perish'd only,
 And alone in that land, with these hands,
Did I lay the dead soul, and all lonely
 Does it lie to this day in the sands.

Lo ! a wild little maiden with tresses
Of gold on the wind of the hills :
Ay, a wise little maiden that guesses
Some good in the cruellest ills ;
And a babe with his baby-fists doubled,
And thrust to my beard, and within,
As he laughs like a fountain half-troubled,
When my finger chucks under his chin.

Should the dead not decay, when the culture
Of fields be resumed in the May ?
Lo ! the days are dark-wing'd as the vulture !
Let them swoop, then, and bear them away :
By the walks let me cherish red flowers,
By the wall teach one tendril to run ;
Lest I wake, and I watch all the hours
I shall ever see under the sun.

It is well, may be so, to bear losses,
And to bend and bow down to the rod ;
If the scarlet red bars and the crosses
Be but rounds up the ladder to God.

But this mocking of men ! Ah, that enters
The marrow ! the murmurs that swell
To reproach for my song-love, that centres,
Vast land, upon thee, are not well.

And I go, thanking God in my going,
That an ocean flows stormy and deep,
And yet gentler to me is its flowing
Than the storms that forbid me to sleep.
And I go, thanking God, with hands lifted,
That a land lies beyond where the free
And the gentle of heart and the gifted
Of soul have a home in the sea.





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SONGS OF THE SIERRAS,

BY JOAQUIN MILLER.

LONDON: LONGMANS, GREEN, READER, AND DYER.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

The Saturday Review.



WHATEVER the faults of style which disfigure Mr. Miller's poems—and they are many and flagrant—there can be no doubt that he possesses the genuine poetic faculty. He writes because he cannot help it—the best reason of all—perhaps the only justifiable reason for composing poetry. The snowy Sierra and the tropical cañon, the roving, adventurous borderer's life, the stirring tales of hunt and foray, all these supplied materials pregnant with romance and poetry, and only required to be transmuted into words. This task Mr. Miller has attempted, and the fact that his lines glow with tropical passion, and that his descriptions transport us in imagination to the scenes among which they were composed, compels us to forgive him for the lawlessness with which he tramples on the conventional limitations of art.

* * * * *

“With Walker in Nicaragua” is a passionate story of love and adventure. The lawless and romantic career of the great

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filibuster has exercised a powerful fascination over the poet, and there is a fine Western twang about the rhymes and expressions in the panegyric of Walker with which the poem opens.

* * * * *

The whole poem glows with the passion and ardour of youth. We are carried on in loose, swinging, vigorous lines, which tell of the victorious march of the adventurers, the discovery of the hoary Temple of the Sun buried deep within the quinine wood, the rest in the white-walled city by the sea, the long sweet days of rapturous love. Then comes the reverse: the enemy swoops down on the unsuspecting city, the remnant of the little band are driven bleeding to the sea, and scarcely escape in their boats; the hapless Montezuman maid, who had been parted from her lover in his hurried flight, tries to follow his ship, but her tiny boat upsets whilst she is trying in vain to attract his attention, and it is only the next morning that he hears from a rough seaman of her death.

In these two poems there is some attempt at a plot and construction. Passionate though they are, the artist is still master of his material. But in the four which follow, the formative controlling element which is essential to a work of art is almost wholly submerged in a swaying, tumultuous flood of incoherent feeling and imagery. There flits before us a wild phantasmagoria of scenes of passion and turmoil, in which the last representatives of an expiring race—as in “Californian” and the “Last of the Taschastas”—fall in a desperate, unavailing struggle with the pale-faced conqueror; or, as in “Ina” and the “Lay of the Tall Alcalde,” men weary of civilization and sickened by perfidy desert their homes for the freer life of the hunter or the savage. The volume ends with a short piece entitled “Burns and Byron,” a tribute to the genius of the two singers whose shrines our Western poet visits when he lands on the shores of the Old World.

Of the two poets whose names are thus coupled, there can be no doubt which is the one with whom Mr. Miller's genius has most affinity, and to whose influence he is most deeply indebted. The great leader of the English “Sturm und Drang” epoch has been deposed from the throne which he once occupied, and, in the re-action which has followed, we are perhaps in some danger of forgetting the incalculable boon which he conferred on our national literature when he struck off from

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it the icy fetters of spurious classicalism, and set passion once more bounding through the shrunken and lowered veins of the English muse. The epidemic of Byronism has passed away, and we are happily rid of the cadaverous, long-haired race of poetasters whom our fathers were so fond of caricaturing, who nourished an undying hatred to society, and hugged themselves in imagination as the possible perpetrators of appalling crimes. But this last trans-Atlantic representative of Byronism is a very different thing from these. Not that he is by any means free from the characteristic faults of the school to which he belongs. His types of human nature are limited, and if his muse were to prove prolific, we should soon grow weary of these lawless heroes, whose life is a whirl of adventure and excitement, who fling defiance at law and society, and whose passionate utterances not seldom degenerate into mere incoherent, frothy rant. Moreover, Mr. Miller is far from having obtained complete mastery over either the words or the metres which he employs as the vehicles of his poetry. It would be easy to collect from almost every page specimens of weak and disfiguring expletives, of impossible grammar, of alliterations in which sense is sacrificed to sound, of lines which defy the most ingenious scanning. To use Mr. Miller's own figure, it is a "loose, uncouth bouquet" that he has sent us across the waters, but it contains flowers of rare and tropical brilliancy. The faults of his matter are faults inherent in Byronism; the faults of his form are excusable in one who can have had but little opportunity of familiarizing himself with literary models. But there is at least one point in which the American poet possesses an incontestable superiority over his English model. It is not upon the dreams of a morbid imagination, but upon his own actual experience, upon the materials derived from an adventurous life on the border of civilization, that he has drawn. The mountains and the desert have been his home, the hunter and the gold-seeker have been his companions; he has witnessed, perhaps taken part in, the death-struggle of the white man and the red. Hence, in his most feverish and over-charged passages there is a ring of genuineness which is absent from Byron's poetry.

SONGS OF THE SIERRAS.

Blackwood's Magazine.

THE "Songs of the Sierras" are, it is evident, a genuine native production of those glowing and wealthy wilds of which we know so little. They contain a curious, crude, sometimes almost splendid promise of original poetry, all coloured and fragrant with the brightness and lavish, flowery richness of the land it comes from. . . . That he has struck a new vein of daring, glowing, and real verse is not to say that he will ever write his name among the stars, or justify the abandonment of common earth for the slippery slopes of Olympus which has cost so many broken hearts. We do not know enough of him to be able to say whether Wordsworth or Tennyson had done so much at his stage of development; but even that is a fallacious mode of argument, for there are men upon whom fame drops unawares in middle age, as well as those who have taken her temple by storm in youth. What we can say is that there is unbounded fervour and a great deal of force and wealth in several of his poems, and that he has indeed a new world—a virgin land, to draw his imagery and his incidents from; an advantage fully counterbalancing the disadvantage of being walled in by sea and mountains from knowledge of our old, old world, which has crooned out all its miseries and delights into song, and spent its wealth without thought of the future for thousands of lingering years.

The Athenæum.

THERE is a current notion that American poetry should be different in kind from ours—should, in the slang of criticism, "be racy of the soil from which it springs." Rivers of prodigious length, vast prairies and forests, and huge mountain-ranges, must, it is believed, reflect themselves in the productions of the native poet. We hesitate to share this belief. The bold pioneers who first penetrate the wilderness are too deeply engrossed in material concerns to occupy themselves with the divine art; and, when the wilderness becomes the seat of a dense population, its inhabitants live under conditions such as we. . . .

Mr. Miller has spent his whole life in the wild woods and mountains of Western America, and yet is not an American

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of the type anticipated. "Polished bronzes," "chiselled marble," "Italian skies," "Grecian forms," have meaning to him; and he has had dreams of dead and living poets the memory of which remains.

First in place, and, we may add, in excellence, is "Arizonian," so named from that western territory within which the scene is laid.

* * * * *

There is much beauty in the idea which forms the basis of the poem; but the treatment is frequently crude and unsatisfactory. Mr. Miller has himself described his work as rough quartz; and he is not inaccurate. We find the gold to be of finest quality; but the proportion it bears to the baser material is small. As will be seen from the quotations we have made, the poems show traces of the influence of our best modern poets. Mr. Miller, however, is no copyist. If he has made other men his models, his life, experience, and nature have the effect of giving to his production a freshness and an originality obviously due to his own individuality. He resembles Mr. Browning in novel and apt metaphors taken from objects high or low, common or uncommon, but always new and forcible, and often quaint—making one smile at the sudden turn. So also he is like Mr. Browning in his homely strokes of humour.

Fraser's Magazine.

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THESE are extracts from the preface to a volume of poems by a young Californian writer, who has had the courage to come half across the world to a face-to-face encounter with the critics of Great Britain. And apart from the announcement here contained, of verses likely to prove interesting from their very subject-matter, we cannot but be struck by the honesty, humour, and pathos of this preface: indeed, after reading it we are very ready to overlook, as far as reason will permit us, the countless poetic shortcomings for which it prepares us, and at the very least to say of our author, "It would be wrong to let so good a prose writer forsake literature for his native mountains, however much it might please him."

We have already noticed, as excellencies of Mr. Miller's, the

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strong living humanity with which his poems are impregnated, and also his admirable appreciation of Nature; not but that he does not occasionally trip when he describes scenes in which he is not quite at home. . . .

Mr. Miller is at times affected, for all his simplicity. This affectation is, however, chiefly observable in a straining after a species of verbal assonance peculiar to himself. There is, for example, too much self-consciousness in these otherwise beautiful lines:—

“ And the strain’d heart-strings wear bare and brittle,
And the fond hope dieth, so long deferr’d,
And the fair hope lieth in the heart interr’d,
Stiff and cold in its coffin of lead;
For you promise so great and you gain so little;
For you promise so great of glory and gold,
And gain so little that the hands grow cold;
And for gold and glory you gain instead
A fond heart sicken’d and a fair hope dead.

* * * * *

“ The ripen’d fruit a fragrance shed
And hung in hand-reach overhead,
In nest of blossoms *on the shoot*,
The bending shoot that bore the fruit.”

Elsewhere this iteration of sound is no doubt introduced with the finest effect, and indeed constitutes one of the chief graces of Mr. Miller’s rhythm. . . .

But Mr. Miller must not believe his work to be more than well begun. His philosophy is still crude, his dramatic power ill-disciplined, his poetic expression unequal, his rhythm irregular: above all, he has as yet only pleased; it remains to be proved whether he can elevate us. Yet, even if he fails to fulfil this—the poet’s highest mission—we cannot but pronounce him to be, with all his shortcomings, the most remarkable narrative poet that America has yet produced.

The Spectator.



It has for some time been a matter of speculation to Englishmen whether the new life of the English race in the Far West would produce a new growth of poetry. Bret Harte and the author of these “Songs of the Sierras”

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"Where mountains repose in their blueness,
Where the sun first lands in his newness,
And marshals his beams and his lances,
Ere down to the vale he advances
With visor raised, and rides swiftly
On the terrible night in his way,
And slays him, and with his sword deftly
Hews from him the beautiful day,
Lay nestled the town of Renalda."

We must go a long way back to parallel this thorough and un-artificial transfusion of nature with human life. The sea, too, is alive as the moderns can seldom make him:—

"The warm sea fondled with the shore,
And laid his white face on the sands."

* * * * *

There is yet to be noticed another piece of evidence, valuable because quite undesigned, of the primitive atmosphere of thought in which these poems were written. Thrice the speaker is represented counting on his fingers, not as civilized man may do, using them only as an aid or check, but as the savage does, to whom they are the sole instrument and symbol of numeration:—


"I lifted my fingers
And fell to counting the round years over,
That I had dwelt where the sun goes down.
Four full hands, and a finger over!"

"They were so few,
I near could count them on one hand."

"I count my fingers over, so,
And find it years and years ago."

* * * * *

The Pall Mall Gazette.

OICES from the outposts of civilization have been sent up before now, and reached the ears of such as are attentive to poetical curiosities. But no poetry of the backwoods or the far West has ever yet had the sound of this. . . . Mr. Miller has lived the wildest of wild lives;

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has been a filibuster; and the whole atmosphere of his experiences is that of a sudden semi-civilization unchained, with no law and the clash of a hundred violent needs, upon the scene of a grandiose and tropical nature. His poetry, whatever else has to be said of it, is inspired straight by the life which he has known, and thus comes to us with a double freshness—as representing human subjects in an ethical state quite unembarrassed by the restraints of old societies, or any code except a very crude one of honour, and as describing physical nature of a type as unfamiliar as it is impressive.


* * * * *

Thus Mr. Miller has to us the effect of a writer essentially original, even when he is most like his own exemplar. Elsewhere his originality is only too unquestionable from all sides.

* * * * *

Enough has been said and cited to show that in Mr. Joaquin Miller we have to do with a true, although with an untrained poet, in whom neither senses, imagination, nor language are deficient, and whose work, over and above the spirited novelty of its subject-matter, shares that large spirit of winds and mountain-tops, that range of vastness and sense of the ulterior and immeasurable, which was the strength of Byron, and which has been wanting from much of our best contemporary verse. If the impressions of civilization and of literature penetrate the mind of Mr. Miller as strongly and to as good purpose as the impressions of wild life and of nature have penetrated it, and if, at the same time, he maintains his originality under them, we do not see what should prevent him from aspiring to the higher honours of his art.

The Academy.

 HIS is a truly remarkable book. To glance through its pages is to observe a number of picturesque things picturesquely put, expressed in vivid flowing form and melodious words, and indicating strange, outlandish, and romantic experiences. The reader requires no great persuasion to leave off mere skimming and set-to at regular perusal; and, when he does so, he finds the pleasurable impression confirmed and intensified. . . . A poet whose domestic hearth is a hut

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in an unfathomable cañon, whose forest has been a quinine wood, permeated by monkeys,

“ Like shuttles hurried through and through
The threads a hasty weaver weaves,”

and whose song-bird is a cockatoo, and to whom these things, and not the converse of them, are all the genuine formative experiences and typical realities or images of a life, is sure to tell us something which we shall be both curious and interested to think over. There is an impassable gap between the alien *couleur locale* of even so great a poet as Victor Hugo in such a work as “*Les Orientales*,” and the native reciprocity of one like our Californian author, whose very blood and bones are related to the things he describes, and from whom a perception and a knowledge so extremely unlike our own are no more separable than his eye, and his brain. Such being the exceptionable nature of Mr. Miller's subject-matter, the best way of obtaining some specific idea of his work, both in its beauties and in its defects—which latter no doubt are neither few nor insignificant—may be to give a brief account of his stories.

* * * * *

Mr. Miller has realized his poetic identity under very exceptional conditions, highly favourable to spirit and originality, but the contrary, so far as completion or the accepted rules of composition are concerned. He is a poet, and an admirable poet. His first works prove it to demonstration, and superabundantly; and no doubt his future writings will reinforce the proof with some added maturity and charm. He is not the sort of man to be abashed or hurt by criticism. Let me add that the less attention he pays to objections, even if well-founded, and the more he continues to write out of the fulness of his own natural gifts, the better it will probably be for both himself and his readers. America may be proud of him.

The Evening Standard.



HE gifted author of these poems has pursued a singular course in leaving America, his native land, and “seeking the capital of the world to publish” the poems before us. Whether he felt that a poet, like a prophet, has no honour

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in his own country, except in death, when his sepulchre may be garnished, and the marble shaped by the chisel of genius to immortalize the features which in life commanded no respect—this we are not told. . . . We give Mr. Miller merely his due when we say that his poetry is by far the most original and powerful that has yet been heard from beyond the Atlantic. It has a twofold originality about it. The stories, which make up the subject-matter, are original—extremely original—and the style of poetry in which they are embodied is a style which belongs to Mr. Miller, and Mr. Miller alone. His metres, his metaphors, his fluency and rapidity, and the multifarious graces and faults of his verse, are all his own. In no poet of modern days can we find so much originality, and so little that is traceable to either modern or ancient sources. Mr. Miller writes from what he has seen with his own eyes, and heard with his own ears; he has drawn from the fountain of his own inspiration, from his own feelings and fancies, tempered and touched by a thousand influences of strange climes and characters, and circumstances unknown to the range of experience which falls to the lot of most versifiers; as the poet tells us in his introductory lines:—

“ Because the skies were blue, because
The sun in fringes of the sea
Was tangled, and delightfully
Kept dancing on as in a waltz,
And tropic trees bow'd to the seas,
And bloom'd and bore, years through and through,
And birds in blended gold and blue
Were thick and sweet as swarming bees,
And sang as if in Paradise,
And all that Paradise was spring—
Did I too sing with lifted eyes,
Because I could not choose but sing.”

What we most like in these poems, independently of their rare originality, is a certain passionate earnestness of purpose, a dignified scorn of trifling, and a simple directness of thought and feeling, which make their way to our hearts at once. With the exception of Moore's “Lalla Rookh,” we know of no poem so rich in the colouring with which it paints the external loveliness of lands luxuriant in all that is bright and most beautiful in tree or flower, in beast or bird, or more powerfully describes the play and power of the passions in the human heart.

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Chambers's Journal.


 SINGER from the Far West. There are few conventional expressions more frequently heard in the hush of dull dinner-parties, or in the interval between the songs in the drawing-room, than that "this is not an age for poetry," or that "poetry is dying out." They are not very wise persons who utter it; but still, by reason of constant iteration, the thing is believed—by those who do not know true poetry when they read it, but like "a little music" after dinner. As a matter of fact, there probably never were so many poets—real ones—in our own country as at present. . . . We have now to welcome a true poet in the marvellous guise of a Nicaraguan Filibuster. . . . He was a born poet, and has come to Europe for an audience for his songs.

He will secure a large one; for not only are they good—some of them even marvellously good—but upon subjects about which civilized persons know nothing, or have been content to take for granted the superficial accounts of them from travellers or journalists.

* * * * *

"With Walker in Nicaragua" is our author's most characteristic poem, but there are others almost equally good. "Arizonaian" is a charming poem, and Mr. Miller's volume altogether a most welcome and striking production. That he has lived in the scenes he so graphically and musically describes, we should have no doubt, even if we had not his own word for the fact; but he needs no apology "for the bold act of a nameless young man leaving the woods of the Great West, and seeking the capital of the great world to publish."

The Sunday Times.

 ONGS of the Sierras," now before us, is the most remarkable utterance America has yet given. Such a volume must have fallen upon blankest and most unappreciative times not to make a profound impression upon poetical readers. Coming, as it now comes, in a time when poetry has fermented in the minds of men in a fashion unseen since the days of King James I., it is likely to obtain for its

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author highest recognition, and establish his title to widespread admiration. . . . Such fire, such glow, such colour, and such passion as the new poet displays are rare among masters of poetry; and imagination, fervent, and splendid, is not rarely to be discovered. . . . "Arizonian," with which the book commences, is a noble poem.

* * * * *

So long have we dallied over this first and most exquisite poem, we have left ourselves little space to occupy with those which follow. "With Walker in Nicaragua" is intensely powerful and dramatic, and full of truly splendid pictures. The comparisons in this poem have the boldness characteristic of the true poet, who, with his magic insight and power can stoop low as he will with no fear of touching the common-place. Here, in an account of a journey through the Nicaraguan Woods, we see

"How ran the monkeys through the leaves !
How rush'd they through, brown-clad and blue,
Like shuttles hurried through and through
The threads a hasty weaver weaves."

or watch

"How wild and still with wonder stood
The proud mustangs with banner'd main,
And necks that never knew a rein,
And nostrils lifted high and blown."

The reflections on life in this poem, and the description of the catastrophe, have marvellous beauty. Quite similar in spirit are the poems that follow, "Californian" and "The Last Tachastas;" full of glowing colour, and ablaze with golden splendour of light. The "Tale of the Tall Alcalde" is more touching, and has sweet, sad pathos, augmenting and deepening to the time when the lover revisits the tomb of his beloved, hoping to find the flowers blooming he had planted :—

"And when I did not find them there,
I almost deem'd her God unkind,
Less careful of her dust than I."

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The Dark Blue.

THE first thing which moves the reader with delight on dipping into Mr. Miller's writings is, doubtless, their novelty of subject and imagery. We have not hitherto had any writer who, living in the utmost West, and moulded by its influences, has offered us any gift of song; and it is a fresh and delicious experience to be brought face to face with the life and beauty of lands where the slough of minds has not accumulated, and Nature tells more of God's life than of man's. But mere novelty of imagery or subject would in itself be powerless to produce pleasure such as these poems yield. Poetry reveals all things through the poet's peculiar nature, which subdues them to hues of its own, as the green wave the white rocks under it. It is because we feel the subjects he sings of through Mr. Miller's own soul, and this is the soul of a fervent poet, that they assume so great a vividness and beauty for us. We are conscious at the first breath that we are in the presence of a God-moulded poet-mind. The living air of poetry greets us like the sea-smelling wind as we cross the seaward mountains. The first demand of literary criticism is satisfied—the singer has a right to sing, because his passion has impelled him.

* * * * *

Whatever he may do in the future, his book is destined to live long. So long as the early years of Anglo-Saxon civilization in the farthest West continue to interest the world, men's fingers will wander through the pages of these poems. But on the higher grounds of true poetical excellence they will endure, for they have about them a beauty unquestionable, and one wholly their own; a perennial beauty—not such as will cease to seem beautiful after much handling and familiarity; a beauty as imperishable as the peaks of the mountains or the melodies of the sea.

The Westminster Review.

THE same characteristics, leaving out the coarseness which marked Walt Whitman's poetry, may, to a certain extent, be found in Mr. Miller's. He observes nature at first hand. Like Whitman he reminds us of no one

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else. A rough wild humour gives infinite spirit to his strongly-marked, though by no means highly-finished, characters. They behave not like men whom we are accustomed to meet, but still like men whom we can very well imagine living amongst the backwoods and mountains. He presents them to us in the rough. They chew and spit. Still they are men. The same may be said of his sketches of nature. They are thoroughly fresh and original, drawn with free bold strokes. Those who overlooked the great faults in Whitman's poetry for the picturesque style, the vigorous metaphors, the clear-cut descriptions of scenery, and that thorough zest for nature in the backwoods and wilds, will welcome and enjoy Mr. Miller. A short specimen of his rough, quaint style will, however, convey a clearer notion of his poetry than pages of our description.



R. MARSHALL, of the *Chicago Tribune*, writes from Mount Shasta, California:—" . . . An English critic, in reviewing the poems of Joaquin Miller, expressed his wonder that any one could write such descriptions without having breathed the air of Switzerland. Should he ever be fortunate enough to visit Siskiyou County, Cal., the mystery will be explained. In this lofty region, where the Klamath, Shasta, and Sacramento Rivers spring from the eternal glaciers of Mount Shasta, and the summit of the 'Red McCloud' is levelled off into a bare and treeless plain, and splintered mountain-peaks are stationed about, like sentinels uplifting their crimson lances to the sky, he passed several years of his early youth, in daily and nightly communion with the Genius of the Mountains. In fact, his 'Songs of the Sierras' are a guide-book to all the grand features of the country, and it is difficult to refrain from quoting from them, so complete and perfect are his descriptions. His mind and this whole mountain region seem to be a reflex of each other. It is fit that he should sing its praises to the world, for he is its legitimate offspring, and it may claim him as a parent claims its child. . . . In a skirmish that took place between the Shasta Indians and the whites, he was found among the Indians, with whom he sided for some romantic reason, and was captured and imprisoned in the town of Shasta; and this adven-

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ture, no doubt, furnished the material from which he wove the magnificent 'Tale of the Tall Alcalde.'

"I am glad I stumbled on this region of country. Having no acquaintance with Joaquin Miller, except through his published writings, I believe in him thoroughly. His poems are the free outbreathings of a nature trained amid the grandeur and solitude of these majestic mountains, and are entirely destitute of the mawkish sentiment of schools. His description of Castle Lake, in 'Ina,' is one of the most complete and perfect descriptions ever written, and it is exactly correct in all its details. He left here about ten or twelve years ago, and never returned until the past summer, when he made his appearance in a rough costume, slept a night at the base of Mount Shasta, talked in their own jargon to the astonished Indians, who at first did not recognize him, renewed his acquaintance with his old friends, and then left as suddenly as he came."

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